Systematic morality

/ W. Jevons

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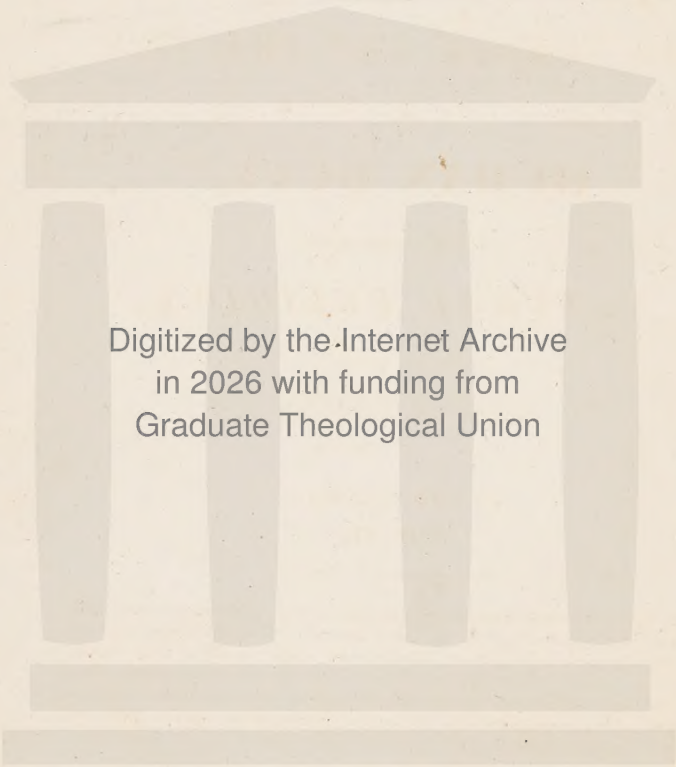

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SYSTEMATIC MORALITY,

OR

A Treatise

ON

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE

OF

HUMAN DUTY,

ON THE GROUNDS OF

NATURAL RELIGION.

BY WILLIAM JEVONS, JUN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

"Cum multa sint in philosophia et gravia et utilia, accurate copioseque a philosophis disputata, latissime patere videntur ea, quæ de officiis tradita ab illis et præcepta sunt. Nulla enim vitæ pars, neque publicis, neque privatis; neque forensibus, neque domesticis in rebus; neque si tecum agas quid, neque si cum altero contrahas, vacare officio potest: in eoque colendo sita vitæ est honestas omnis, et in negligendo turpitudo. Atque hæc quidem quæstio communis est omnium philosophorum: quis est enim, qui, nullis officii præceptis tradendis, philosophum se audeat dicere?" CICERO.

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CONTENTS

OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER VI.

	Page
Duties relating to Love of Power and Opinion	1
Infirmity of Purpose and its opposite	2
Obstinacy	8
Waywardness	9
Churlishness	10
The commanding or decided character	11
Ambition, or the Desire of exalted station	17
Tyranny	21
A meddling disposition	29
Bigotry and Intolerance	31
Intemperate zeal and Party-spirit	32
Liberality and Moderation	40

CHAPTER VII.

Duties relating to the Affections	50
Affections of Kindred	51
Friendship	54
Patriotism	57
Gratitude	60
Sympathy	63

5586

CHAPTER VIII.

Page

Duties relating to the Passions, or those violent perturbations of mind, which are excited by evils and injuries 75

Section i. Duties relating to the evils which arise from Natural causes ..... *ibid*

Heedlessness 76

Excessive anxiety 77

Timidity or Cowardice 81

Contentment 86

Fortitude 93

Patience 96

Hope, and its opposite, Despair 99

Resignation 101

Suicide 102

Section ii. Duties relating to the evils which arise from our own misconduct 108

Remorse, or Self-reproach ..... *ibid*

Section iii. Duties relating to the evils which arise from the agency of others 110

Resentment, and Forgiveness 111

Anger 126

Forbearance or Good Temper 130

Virtues calculated to appease dissension, viz.

Openness and Sincerity in explaining the subject of threatened dissension, and 135

A complying and accommodating temper 137

Suspicion 140

Jealousy 142

Antipathy 144

CHAPTER IX.

Of Religion, and the Regulation of the Religious Affections 147

Preliminary Remarks on the prevalence of religious feelings, and the presumptions and reasonings from which they arise ..... *ibid*

Page
Superstition 152
Enthusiasm 153
Section i. Evidences and Doctrines of Natural Religion.. 155
——— ii. Duties relating to the Religious Affections.... 234
Veneration 235
Gratitude 237
Trust 238
Fear 244
True Piety distinguished from Spurious 248
Observations on the Importance of Religious Principles 255

BOOK III.

DISCIPLINARY MORALITY.

Preliminary Remarks 270

CHAPTER I.

Of the Sources of Human Misconduct 272
Section i. Of Ignorance of Duty 274
——— ii. Of the Influence of Passion or immediate temptation 281
——— iii. Of the Influence of Habit 287
——— iv. Of Self-Deception 292
——— v. Of Individual Character, and the causes which determine it 302

CHAPTER II.

Of Self-Discipline, or the means of correcting and improving the character 311
Section i. Of the Knowledge of Duty, and the means of attaining it ..... *ibid*
Practical Reading 318
Devotional Exercises 321
Private Prayer 327
Social Worship in general 329

and boldness; and hence arise several important diversities of human character. There are some so timid and imbecile, that they yield their purpose at the least appearance of opposition. There are others so bold and daring, that they arrogantly set up their own decisions as a law to others, and determine to bend every opposing will to compliance with their stern resolves. And between these two extremes there are diversities almost as numerous as the individuals of the human race.

The first of these extremes is undoubtedly the worst, for the total want of strength or steadiness of purpose not only precludes the hope of any thing eminently great or good, but affords too just a ground for every apprehension. He who "cannot say 'No' with firmness," is altogether unfit to be trusted to his own guidance in the business and intercourse of human life. Though endowed, it may be, with amiable dispositions, and sincerely desirous of doing what is right, he is one whose good intentions and principles cannot be depended on. He wants that firm foundation on which alone a character of stedfast, uniform, and incorruptible integrity can be established. Indepen-

dence of mind, consistency of conduct, perseverance in a course of duty through evil and through good report, must not in him be looked for. The sport of every foreign impulse, he will go whithersoever the stream may carry him. The abject slave of others' wishes, he will be any thing that may suit the purpose of those with whom he happens to associate. If connected with the wise and good, under their guidance he may escape from serious errors. But if unfortunately he happen to be thrown within the society and influence of profligate men, there is scarcely any extreme of vice to which they may not lead him. He sees, it may be, the path of duty; he often resolves, he often attempts to pursue it; but the first frown of opposition, the first breath of censure or solicitation dissolves his feeble purpose, and diverts him from the laudable course which he had chosen. Without some degree, therefore, of that strength or firmness of character which will enable us to persist in our own determinations in opposition to the wishes or threats of others, there is evidently no security for our innocence, no room for the smallest confidence in our conduct. Without this quality, we are placed at the mercy of all who may seek to

mislead or injure us, and deprived, in a great measure, even of that common protection which is necessary to guard us from wrongs and encroachments. When lawless violence invades our property, or threatens us with personal harm; when power encroaches on our dearest rights, or crafty and designing men attempt to gain unjust advantage over us; the courage which is necessary to withstand the aggression, is evidently a most useful and important quality. Justice to ourselves is not less a duty than justice to others; and though, on the one hand, a too lively feeling of injuries, and a too vindictive spirit in repelling them, cannot be too carefully guarded against; yet, on the other, a tame submission to all the lawless aggressions or unjust encroachments of unprincipled men is equally to be condemned. The man, indeed, who has not spirit to vindicate his rights, betrays not less his duty to society than his duty to himself; for what is more necessary for the public welfare, than that villainy should be defeated, and oppression or tyranny restrained? But to him who aspires, not merely to vindicate his rights, but to act a part of positive and distinguished usefulness in the world, courage to persist in his own deter-

minations is peculiarly necessary. If he desires to rescue the weak from the iron hand of oppression; if he steps forward to withstand the encroachments of power, or to expose and punish public delinquents; if he seeks to accomplish schemes of benevolence which clash with some private interests; or if, to promote the diffusion of truth and knowledge, he avows and promulgates sentiments which are at variance with established systems;—in these, or any similar cases, he must expect to meet with rancorous hostility, from those whose wishes or interests he thus ventures to oppose. Every engine of offence will be set at work against him. Prejudice will question his motives, and calumny will strive to blacken his name. Abuse and invective will be unsparingly heaped upon him. Revenge will plot against him in the dark; and power, unrestrained by mercy, will put forth all its strength to crush him. What then can enable him under such circumstances to perform the part which virtue dictates, but that firmness and intrepidity of mind which will render him superior to the fear of man? For such duties as these the man of timid character is evidently most unfit. However he may be distinguished for those mild and pas-

sive virtues, which conciliate affection, and qualify him for shining in the quiet scene of private or domestic life, yet, if called at any time to the discharge of duties which require him to encounter the enmity or opposition of men, he will shrink with weak alarm from the arduous, but necessary, task. Such are the men, who, in times of persecution, conceal or belie their real sentiments. Such are the men, who, with talents or influence which enable them to render the most important services to mankind, are awed by the terrors of power, or the clamours of bigotry, to desert the honourable post of usefulness. Not so the man of virtuous firmness, whom no ignoble fears can thus withhold from pursuing the course prescribed by duty. Prudence may, indeed, restrain him, as it ought, from flying rashly and needlessly in the face of opposition, and from exciting enmity when no good end is likely to be answered by it; yet when once he has proposed to himself a course of conduct which is clearly pointed out by duty, or recommended by useful and attainable ends, no light obstacles will then divert him from it. He may regret that the prejudices of others should be hostile to his good designs; he may grieve that his

conscientious conduct should excite displeasure in the minds of those whose good opinion he would not willingly lose; but he cannot on this account abandon a course which he has well considered and deliberately chosen, nor forfeit, for the sake of the approbation of others, the more valuable approbation of his own conscience. Armed in the consciousness of rectitude, he disregards alike the sneers of ridicule, and the frowns and threats of malice. Prejudice may decry him; opposing interests may thwart him; power and numbers may stand in array against him; his property, his liberty, his life itself may be endangered; but in the midst of all these obstacles and perils, he holds on his dauntless course, and undergoes every thing, sacrifices every thing, rather than bend to what his conscience disapproves.

> Justum ac tenacem propositi virum
> Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
> Non vultus instantis tyranni
> Mente quatit solida.

A character of this description, where firmness of mind is united with sound judgment and good principles, presents a truly dignified spectacle; and however it may be the object

of local and temporary resentment, seldom fails to enforce in the end the respect and admiration of mankind. It is the character of those who have borne the utmost rigours of persecution, and encountered death in its most terrific forms, rather than make professions or compliances which conscience disapproved. It is the character of those who have distinguished themselves by their manful resistance of tyranny and oppression, and whom the terrors of power could not compel to bend to its arbitrary decrees, or to relinquish their own or their country's rights. It is the character of all who have held up shining examples of rare and eminent virtue amidst prevailing wickedness, refusing, in despite of scorn and obloquy, to follow the multitude in doing evil.

Inflexibility of purpose, however, is not in all instances to be accounted a virtue. When not founded in reason, nor guided by good principles, it degenerates into mere Obstinacy, Waywardness, or Churlishness, which qualities must be carefully distinguished from rational and virtuous firmness.

Obstinacy is a fault of which the weakest

minds are capable; for they who are most easily removed from their purpose by fear, can stubbornly enough resist the wishes of others, in cases where they have nothing to apprehend from resistance; and they who in general are most passively obedient to the decisions of a stronger mind, and have no confidence whatsoever in their own judgment in matters of real moment, are sometimes provoked to assert a fancied independence by occasional pertinacity in trifles. The temper also of some persons is such, that any attempt to move, persuade, or influence them to relinquish their own wishes or intentions, serves only to rouse them to stouter opposition. Turning a deaf ear to reason and persuasion, they triumph in the thought of doing as they please, and arguments, entreaties, threats, are all unavailing to move them in the least from their stupid purpose.

Waywardness is a quality nearly allied to Obstinacy, but implies, not merely the inert resistance of another's reasonable wishes, but a more active and positive wilfulness. It is the fault of those whom early indulgence has rendered impatient of the least contradiction or restraint, and who give themselves up

to capricious humours, and persist in following unwise and pernicious courses, in despite of the most earnest remonstrances and expostulations of their friends.

There is another variety of the wilful temper, which may be distinguished by the name of *Churlishness*. It consists in that habitually perverse and unaccommodating temper, which unaccountedly delights to stand in the way of others' wishes, to deny with petulance the most reasonable requests, and to repel with rudeness the most courteous and innocent inquiries. It is the fault of old age rendered crabbed by infirmities, or arises from a temper soured by ill usage, or rendered suspicious to excess by frequent experience of the treachery, artifice, or deceitfulness of men.

These dispositions are blamable, merely because they imply a self-will which is deaf to reason. True firmness is perfectly compatible with a tractable, courteous, and accommodating temper. It is ever accessible to reason and expostulation. It does not resist from the mere love of opposition, but from a deliberate conviction that resistance is a duty. It does not

pertinaciously stickle for trifles, but willingly concedes what it can for the sake of peace, though inflexible in its purpose in matters of real moment.

We have spoken hitherto of such dispositions and duties only as prompt or require us merely to *oppose* the will of others. The desire to *control* and *command* that will, and to make it subservient to our own, which is more properly termed the love of power, is generally the passion of a stronger mind. They who are at once the most eager and the most able to exercise control, are usually distinguished by a peculiar share of that decided and intrepid spirit, without which we seldom find the desire, and never the ability, to rule. They must possess, in the first place, peculiar promptitude, energy, and confidence of judgment. The man whose determinations are fluctuating and unsteady, who long remains hesitating how to decide, and whose decisions, when formed, are produced only by a slight preponderance of the scale of judgment, is not likely to carry his determinations into effect with much energy or resolution. Persuasion may easily withdraw him, or opposition deter him from his purpose; or some

new consideration, before unthought of, may occur to alter his resolves. One of this frame of mind, so far from desiring to lead and control others, is glad to be himself directed. He feels such distrust of his own judgment, particularly in any hazardous and important case, that he willingly commits the guidance of his conduct to the judgment of another. Hence it is that princes of this character, being conscious of their incompetence to exercise that sway to which the fortune of their birth has entitled them, are wont to resign the reins of government to the abler hands of some minister or favourite, content themselves with the mere name and ensigns of royalty. The man of commanding mind, on the contrary, has the fullest confidence in his own judgment. He never hesitates long in forming a determination, and never fluctuates or recedes, when his resolution has once been taken. Having once decided and entered upon action, he allows no fears, or doubts, or afterthoughts, to embarrass his proceedings. He keeps his object always steadily in view; he sees it always in the same light, and constantly directs towards it the full force of his desires and energies. Besides this promptitude and energy of determination, he

is also distinguished by peculiar intrepidity of mind. The doubts and hesitation of the irresolute man arise generally from his calculating between his wishes and his fears, or between different subjects of fear which alternately present themselves, and each of which in its turn appears the most formidable. The man of commanding mind despises all fears, and has therefore only to consult his own wishes. He sets at nought all opposition, and unmoved alike by threats, reproaches, and derision, resolves to make every will bend to his own strong determination. A man of this commanding character is peculiarly qualified for the exercise of power, and seems marked by nature for a leader of the common herd of mortals. He moves with such resistless might, that the crowd instinctively give way before him, and none but spirits equally determined will venture to oppose his progress. Scorn is checked, and censure silenced, and opposition shrinks confounded in his presence.* Nor does the efficacy of his character consist solely in his thus deterring and bearing down opposition. He generally gains a positive ascendency over the minds of others, and makes them the wil-

* See note A at the end of the volume.

ling instruments of his purpose. For the many who feel incapable of thinking or acting for themselves, will gladly commit themselves to the guidance of a stronger mind. The class or party with which he ranks himself, or those whose rights, opinions, or interests he defends, will willingly acknowledge a leader so intrepid, and idolize a champion who affords so fair a hope of triumph to their cause. And when once he is become an object of attention and notoriety, the vanity of numbers will be gratified to act under him a subordinate part, and thus to catch a borrowed lustre from the splendour of his name. The influence which he thus exercises over the wills and actions of men, appears to extend even to the events of fortune, which, far as they are placed beyond all human control, seem unaccountably to favour his wishes, and accommodate themselves to his designs. Not that he is really beyond the reach of casualties; but because ordinary casualties, which would altogether dishearten men of less energetic character, serve only to incite him to fresh endeavours, and to call forth from his inexhaustible mind new and unexpected resources; because he " catches with a vigilant eye, and seizes with a strong hand, all the possibilities

of his actual situation," and thus finds means of surmounting difficulties which to others seemed unconquerable, and of repairing misfortunes by which others would have been driven to despair.* A character of this description evidently qualifies its possessor for acting a distinguished and important part on the theatre of life; but, according as it is well or ill directed, it will render him eminently useful, or eminently mischievous to society. The history of mankind, indeed, presents too many instances of its misdirection, and too frequently exhibits it as the source of extensive evils and enormous crimes. It has assisted ambition in its strides to conquest and dominion; it has instigated tyranny to its unjust usurpations and deeds of atrocity; it has filled the earth with violence and deluged it with blood; yet wherever its energies have been rightly directed, it has proved equally efficacious in doing good, and even those who have exhibited these mournful instances of its perversion, have sometimes, by the partial direction of their powers to better ends, almost redeemed their crimes and mischiefs by their signal services. A resolute and commanding mind, guided by

* Note B.

enlarged views and good principles, constitutes the greatest of human characters, and when conjoined with favourable circumstances of external fortune, confers incalculable power of usefulness. Few schemes of great public utility can be carried into effect without encountering opposition somewhere, from adverse prejudices or interfering interests, and it is only the man of decisive and intrepid spirit, who is qualified for the arduous task. By this character, the great benefactors of the world, who have stood forth in various ages and countries, as the champions of freedom, the reformers of abuse, the destroyers of error, and the founders of new systems of faith, and new institutions of government, have all been more or less distinguished. What else could have enabled them to defy the frowns of malice, the threats of power, the aspersions of calumny, and all the thousand dangers which stood in formidable array against them; or how otherwise could they have acquired that wonderful ascendency over the wills and opinions of the multitude, which was necessary to the accomplishment of their great designs? Such examples are not, indeed, calculated for general imitation; for to few are given those talents and opportunities, which

enable them to become the lights and ornaments of the world. But that vigour of will and intrepidity of mind, which are so essential to the great character, are requisite in some degree to those of humbler sphere, and will be found to constitute, in every state of life, the best foundation of high and permanent excellence.

The love of power, though peculiarly the ruling passion of the character just described, is found to influence the conduct of many, who can boast no other qualifications for the exercise of power, than the mere accidental superiority of age, or station, or other extrinsic circumstances. The forms which it most commonly assumes are those of Ambition, or the desire of exalted station, and Tyranny.

The term *Ambition* is employed in common usage, and has already been used in this treatise, to denote the desire and pursuit of Fame, as well as of Power; and the reason is that the latter passion seldom appears unaccompanied by the former. Yet they are evidently distinct from, and independent on one another; and though the love of power, or exalted station, is

rarely found unaccompanied by the love of glory, yet the love of glory is the ruling passion of many, who are incapable, and feel themselves to be incapable of exercising sway. In those, however, who aspire to stations of rule or authority, the two passions are usually combined; and it is perhaps the distinction attendant upon such stations, which constitutes their principal attraction. There is something peculiarly fascinating in that species of distinction which is sought in connexion with power. It is not that empty and transitory admiration, which is sufficient to satisfy the vain. It is not the tranquil regard which is felt for moral worth, and which is limited to the narrow circle of a few acquaintances and friends. It is not a renown, like that of genius or learning, confined to the knowledge of the discerning few, and seldom extensively diffused till its subject is no more. The renown of power is that tribute of homage, respect, and submission, which is the most flattering of all tributes to human pride;—a fame which is most extensively diffused, and most visibly and immediately manifested. He who has acquired a name by acting a distinguished part on the theatre of public life, has not to wait the tedious progress by

which a more quiet merit makes its way to public notice. He is at once the object of universal attention, and the theme of every tongue. He cannot go forth from the retirement of his dwelling, but every eye is directed towards him, and the whispered information of his appearance spreads around him as he goes. All his movements are noticed and recorded. His most trifling remarks are listened to with profound attention; his very behaviour and dress are narrowly observed, and become a pattern for general imitation. The pomp of state and attendance surrounds his person, and every thing, in short, conspires to that 'enlargement of the idea of self,'* which is so peculiarly gratifying to the pride of human nature. No wonder, then, that the desire of such distinction so strongly seizes upon the minds of those who have the prospect of obtaining it. This it is which constitutes, in fact, the principal charm of exalted station, and which, more perhaps than the love of rule itself, renders power an object of such intense desire and eager contest. Hence that strange infatuation, of which so many instances occur in history, of princes and men of elevated rank, who, though already

* See Miss Hamilton's Popular Essays. Essay iv.

possessed, in the utmost abundance, of every thing essential to the real comfort of life, yet involve themselves needlessly in dangerous intrigues, embark in perilous enterprises of war or faction, and dare a thousand dangers and a thousand crimes, all for no other object than some higher title, or some inconsiderable increase of authority or territory, which seems incapable of adding any thing to their real happiness.—Of those who thus thirst for aggrandizement, few, it is to be feared, are at all accessible to the influence of the moralist's persuasions; else it might be useful to show, that the paths of ambition are beset with dangers, and lead to mischiefs, which more than counterbalance their allurements. Witness the many narratives, which history contains, of the sudden reverses and miserable end of the restless competitors for power, and of the wretched state of insecurity and distrust, which has usually resulted from their most successful schemes. Witness the sanguinary contests for a disputed sceptre, which have so often agitated kingdoms with civil commotion, and the long series of frightful crimes, which have marked the progress of those, who, like Richard of infamous memory, have "cut their way to a throne with a bloody

axe." The annals of the world, in almost every page, afford an impressive lesson to the votaries of ambition, and exhibit, in a stronger light than any abstract arguments, the dark criminality of that unbounded lust of power, which has brought so many sorrows on the human race.

The love of sway further manifests itself in *Tyranny*. It is seldom that they who possess power, and delight in the exercise of it, can be restrained by a due regard to the rights or welfare of others. Loving to show their authority, and to lord it over those who are subject to their control, they too often exercise their power with wantonness; and if their will be in the least resisted, overleap all bounds of justice and of mercy, and scruple no means, however cruel and oppressive, of subduing that resistance. Nor is it only in stations of high authority that instances of tyranny occur. The love of sway is manifested in various ways by men in every degree of authority, from the monarch upon the throne to his humblest minister of justice. And even in the lowly walks of private life, there is many a petty despot, who domineers over his family and dependants

with the same tyrannical spirit, as that which sports, in a wider sphere, with the lives and liberties of thousands.

> Man, proud man,
> Dress'd in a little brief authority,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heav'n,
> As make the angels weep.

What is it, we naturally ask, which constitutes the inducement to this wanton exercise of power? If power can be equally displayed in deeds of benevolence, whence that diabolical spirit which chooses rather to exert it in acts of cruelty and oppression? It seems indeed a choice of which none but a being of purely malignant nature could be capable; but a little reflection will suffice to show, that, though it cannot be justified, it may be explained consistently with the ordinary principles of human conduct.—Fear is obviously the most unequivocal acknowledgement, which one man can make, of another's superior power, and the best proof, which it is possible to give, of that submissive deference which is so gratifying to the heart of pride. The *attachment* of mankind may be easily gained by the cheap exercise of a little courtesy, or by some small exer-

tions or sacrifices for their benefit. It argues no confession of superiority; it affords no proof of a disposition to submit. This, therefore, is not the tribute which he who loves to rule particularly desires. He considers it rather as the resort of weakness, to court the affections of men, and imagines that such conduct can only tend to encourage resistance or invite attack. He delights to feel that his will is law. He takes a pride in displaying the extent of his power, and desires to see continual and unequivocal tokens of submissive obedience to his behests. Without a powerful principle of duty, therefore, or a large intermixture of benevolent feeling, to restrain it, the love of power will commonly seek its object, by operating upon the fears rather than the affections of men. Of such conduct history affords us numerous instances, in monarchs who have ruled their subjects with an iron sceptre, regardless how much they were hated, provided they were also feared.* But happily the page which records their tyranny, seldom fails to exhibit also its natural consequence and deserved punishment, by relating how miserably they have perished, overtaken by the hand of vengeance, or how

* Oderint, dum metuant. Ennius.

more miserably they have lived, a prey to fears far worse than those which they inspired. But even in the humbler scenes of private life, examples not unfrequently occur of similar tyranny exercised by masters or parents, who strangely prefer the authority which is built on fear, and the obedience which is compelled by force, to the benignant sway of love, and that prompt and willing obedience which affection dictates. These also, like tyrants on a larger scale, pay dearly for their wanton exercise of power, by losing those affections of kindred and friends, which form the sweetest solace of human life. Repelling by their sternness all attachment, they place themselves alone in the midst of society, and can expect no service, even in their utmost need, but that which fear extorts, or duty coldly dictates. The obedience which is yielded to them even in the plenitude of their power, is imperfect, because it is constrained:—it is merely the eye-service, which is exact in the performance of what is required, wherever neglect would be apparent, but rejoices to disobey, whenever disobedience may be safely ventured. The stern parent who rules his family only by the principle of fear, may succeed in enforcing a strict regularity of con-

duct while he is alive and present, or so long as there is no possibility of escaping from his power; but when once the restraint of his presence or authority is removed, there is too much reason to apprehend that the joy of newly acquired liberty will break forth in all the license of criminal excess.

The inclination to tyrannize, it should be observed, belongs not exclusively to those who are best fitted for command. History informs us that some of the weakest and most despicable of princes have been the worst of tyrants. The bloody Nero, on his reverse of fortune, was incapable of making a single effort to retrieve his ruined affairs, and evinced, in the last miserable days of his life, the most contemptible imbecility. And no English monarchs made more unwarrantable encroachments on the liberties of their people, than the two who were most remarkable for their weakness, John and Henry the third, who alternately stretched their prerogative beyond all bounds, and then submitted to such restrictions of their authority as left them little more than the empty name of royalty. Respecting the latter of these princes, it is remarked by Hume, that "of all men

nature seemed least to have fitted him for being a tyrant; yet there are instances of oppression in his reign, which, though derived from precedents left him by his predecessors, had been carefully guarded against by the Great Charter, and are inconsistent with all rules of good government."*—This combination of such seemingly incongruous characters as those of a tyrant and a coward admits of easy explanation. It has often been remarked, and the remark is not less just than common, that the greatest cowards are generally capable of the greatest cruelties; and the reason is obvious. Whatever inspires fear, which is the most wretched of human passions, necessarily, on that account, inspires the most malignant hatred. The coward, therefore, though he will at one time crouch with the most abject submission to those of whom he stands in dread, yet when once by any means he has gained a complete ascendency, will endeavour to retaliate the full measure of his own pangs, and in proportion to his former fears will be the severity of his vengeance when those fears are removed. Hence the alternate extremes of tyranny at one time, and of tame submission to usurpation at

* Hume's History of England, ch. xii.

another, which we may generally remark in the conduct of the most weak princes. Sometimes, however, the wanton exercise of power in men of this character may be considered as a species of affectation. Feeling their want of those qualities which fit for command, they are more anxious on that account to appear to possess them, and imagine that, by a certain show of vigour in the exercise of authority, they will better secure respect and submission. Now as affectation always overshoots its mark and betrays itself by blunders, it is not surprising that this attempt should lead them to exercise their power without moderation or judgment. The man of truly great mind, on the contrary, conscious of his real strength, and knowing that others are sensible of it too, is far less anxious to display it by the wanton exercise of power. He spares, accordingly, the weak, over whom superiority affords no triumph, and puts forth his power only in the nobler contest with those who on more equal terms obstruct or rival him. *Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*, is the maxim upon which it is his boast to act, and therefore, though prone to be overbearing and absolute in requiring submission to his will, he seldom exhibits that wanton, capricious, and

extravagant exercise of power, which marks the sway of feebler minded tyrants.

There is a fault, however, to which men of decisive and commanding character, even when guided by good principles and engaged in the execution of laudable designs, are liable, and which, though it falls far short of what is usually termed tyranny, partakes somewhat of a tyrannical character; it is, that they generally rely too much upon forcible measures for defeating opposition, and think not of gaining the minds of men over to their purposes by the gentler methods of persuasion and conciliation. The qualities in which they excel are seldom accompanied by, and perhaps are hardly compatible with, that gentleness or sympathy, which is ever prompt to consult the wishes and participate in the feelings of others. They are apt, therefore, needlessly to disregard those wishes and feelings. They reckon too much upon implicit compliance with their will, and show too little indulgence to those prejudices, fears, or scruples of others, which obstruct the execution of their designs. There is an air of authority and dictation about them, which seems to refuse to others the very right of exercising their own

judgment. And whenever opposition arises, they disdain to soften or bribe it to compliance by any relaxation of their purpose, or any modification, however inconsiderable, of their schemes.* Such conduct is evidently unwise, since it provokes opposition which would not otherwise have arisen, or prolongs it, where it would otherwise have subsided. Persuasion will sometimes effect what force or authority cannot; and resoluteness of purpose, when softened by a due degree of gentleness, and a proper regard to the feelings of others, will often ensure the most complete success, where, without that qualification, it would only create offence and end in failure.

There is another form of the love of sway, which, though it cannot be classed under the heads of Ambition or Tyranny, demands here a share of our attention. Owing to a certain natural fondness for action, joined to a conceit of their own judgment in business, some persons delight to have their opinion consulted and followed; are ready to put themselves forward in every transaction in which they are allowed or entitled to interfere, and are never satisfied till

* Note C.

they have engrossed the whole conduct and management of it to themselves. This disposition renders them often extremely useful, by prompting them to take an active part in public affairs, to engage with ardour in promoting schemes of general utility, or to exert themselves with zeal in the service of individuals. But in every business in which they engage, their opinion must be consulted and their advice followed, or they will altogether withdraw their aid, and perhaps exert their utmost influence to thwart the endeavours and plans of others. So long as things are managed in their own way, they are all activity, energy, and zeal; but let them be opposed or interfered with in their proceedings, and they will lose sight of every object, but the maintenance of their own will, or the gratification of their resentment, if they cannot prevail. Such persons will prove most valuable friends to those who are willing to submit implicitly to their guidance; but let their opinion be disputed, or their advice neglected, and their friendship will be converted into rancorous enmity.

The propensity of which we are now treating sometimes displays itself under the form of

Bigotry and *Intolerance.* The desire to control the *will* of others naturally produces, and seems indeed almost necessarily to involve, the desire to control their *opinions.* The same peculiarity in the faculty of judgment, which renders a man decided and energetic in his determinations, will generally also render him positive and dogmatical in his opinions, and he will as little bear contradiction in the one, as opposition in the other. As the man of decided will keeps one object steadily in sight, regards that object constantly in the same point of view, and pursues it, therefore, with an eagerness which never slackens or abates; so the intolerant bigot has only one way of considering any speculative subject. His mind is too contracted to allow him to take a large and impartial survey of any subject of dispute. His thoughts cannot range out of that narrow track in which they have been accustomed to run. For this reason he is so positive in his own opinion, that he cannot imagine how any one can possibly think differently. He is apt, accordingly, to suspect the motives of those who differ from him. He imputes their difference of opinion to wilful obstinacy, or artful dissimulation, and is as much provoked and irritated by it, as if it were

an instance of unjustifiable opposition to his will. No wonder, therefore, if to him the arm of power appears the fittest instrument of conversion.

This explanation, however, does not apply to every instance of intolerance; for not unfrequently this spirit arises merely from offended pride. The temper of some persons is such, that every departure from their own standard of truth appears to cast an imputation upon their judgment, and to imply a charge of ignorance, mistake, or credulity, which mortifies their self-complacence. Though, accordingly, they cannot, in the abstract, deny to others the right of private judgment, yet regarding an attack upon their opinions as an attack upon their dignity, they are apt to resent it as a personal affront, and no honesty of intention on the part of the convert who has deliberately renounced the tenets held by them, can bring them to forgive the deeper wound which their pride receives from this more pointed imputation.

Nearly allied to bigotry, and derived from the same source, is the spirit of *intemperate zeal.* Persons zealous in the propagation of

their sentiments, usually take credit to themselves for being actuated solely by a love of truth, and a desire to promote by its diffusion the welfare of mankind. I am far from meaning to deny in all cases the truth of such pretensions: but certainly in many instances the zeal which assumes this fair appearance, arises in reality from the ambition of domineering over the opinions of mankind. In men of distinguished talents and daring intrepidity, in circumstances favourable to the purpose, this ambition may aspire to set up entirely new systems of opinion, to establish new sects or parties, or to change the religious creed or political institutions of a nation; and in point of fact, it may not unfairly be presumed, that most of those who have thus immortalized their names, have been actuated in their bold endeavours by motives of this description.* But to act this distinguished part on the theatre of human life, can fall to the lot of very few. The bulk of mankind think little for themselves, but contentedly walk in those beaten tracks of established custom or opinion, in which the circumstances of birth and education have chanced to direct them; and even of that

* Note D.

small number who have sufficient strength and independence of judgment to form opinions of their own, few possess sufficient boldness or adequate means for attempting to propagate them. The generality, therefore, have no other way of gratifying their love of opinion, than by means of their connexion with some sect or party. Thus love of opinion most commonly manifests itself under the form of *party-spirit*, and under this form exhibits still, though under a more subtle disguise, the same domineering character. When a man has once enrolled himself in a party, he naturally feels himself to be in some measure identified with it. Its honour, its interest, its power, he considers as his own. An attack upon his party he therefore feels and resents as an attack upon himself, and its increase in numbers and influence gives him somewhat of the delight of a personal triumph. Party-spirit thus partaking of the nature of a selfish feeling, may be presumed to partake also of that proneness to injustice which belongs to all other selfish propensities; and the fact is, that it surpasses them all in its power of misleading the conduct and perverting the understandings of men; producing a more shameless and unscrupulous injustice, a more unre-

strained and unrelenting tyranny, and a more complete dissolution of all moral ties, than any other principle of human conduct; and for this reason, that it has not the appearance of a selfish principle. Propensities more obviously and directly selfish excite such strong and general disgust, when openly manifested and unreservedly indulged, that a man is under an absolute necessity of concealing and restraining them in some degree, if he would not raise society in arms against him. But attachment to a party has all the appearance of public spirit and benevolence, and misled by this appearance, the blind partisan sincerely believes that he is actuated by no other than the best of motives. His zeal, moreover, for the interest of his party being countenanced by numbers, he thinks not of concealing or repressing it, but glories in displaying it, and obeys its impulse without the least restraint. Whatever restrictions he may impose upon himself in the pursuit of his private interest, he scruples no means whatsoever of advancing the interest of his party, the most iniquitous means being sanctified in his view by the supposed importance of the end to which they are subservient. Hence the amazing influence of party-spirit in

perverting the understandings and hardening the hearts of men, confining their affections within some narrow pale, and rendering them blind to all that is good beyond it. Hence it is that the annals of those periods in which factions have run peculiarly high, present so many shocking instances of atrocity, perfidy, and hatred, and exhibit men as losing their accustomed regard to the plainest principles of morality, and assuming a character of ferocity scarcely human.* It is astonishing, moreover, to observe on what very trifling points the most violent disputes of parties sometimes turn. The reader of ecclesiastical history will be at no loss to remember accounts of various controversies scarcely less ridiculous than that devised by Swift's inventive humour;—of controversies maintained with the fiercest animosity about ceremonies of no imaginable importance, or forms of words to which no possible ideas could be attached. The dispute so long and so violently agitated between the Eastern and Western churches respecting the time of observing Easter;† the obstinate schism of the Donatists, which originated in a trifling irregularity in the election of a bishop;‡ the violent factions

* Note E.

† See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Cent. ii. Part ii. ch. iv.

‡ Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ch. xxi.

of Rome and Constantinople which so furiously contended for their favourite colours in the circus and the hippodrome;* and the civil war which was kindled in Russia by the controversy about the number of fingers to be used in making the sign of the cross;† these and many similar instances of party rage, employed about little things, supply an abundant subject of melancholy reflection or satirical remark on the folly and imbecility of human nature; but when considered as instances of that love of domination which is so deeply implanted in the human heart, these strange extravagancies, though still unjustifiable, will cease to appear altogether unaccountable. Where the contest is for victory, not for truth, the intrinsic importance of the point in dispute is never in the least regarded. The question between the contending parties is not, what is true, but which shall have the glory of making good its own opinion, and imposing submission or silence upon the opposite party. However unimportant, therefore, in itself, may be the point in dispute, the struggle is as vehement, and the animosity of the contending parties as furious,

* Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ch. xl.

† See Voltaire's History of Charles XII. Book i.

as if their highest interests were at stake.* The slightest difference in opinion or practice; the observance or neglect of some frivolous ceremony; the acknowledgement or denial of some nice refinement in doctrine, or some unintelligible form of words, is enough to excite the utmost virulence of controversy. And perhaps it is not too much to assert, that the more unintelligible the subject in dispute, the greater is the acrimony with which that dispute is conducted. "Wherever," observes a profound historian, "a man's knowledge and experience give him a perfect assurance in his own opinion, he regards with contempt, rather than with anger, the opposition and mistakes of others. But while men zealously maintain what they neither clearly comprehend nor entirely believe, they are shaken in their imagined faith by the opposite persuasion or even doubts of other men, and vent on their antagonists that impatience which is the natural result of so disagreeable a state of the understanding."†

The foregoing remarks, moreover, will serve to explain the reason why greater animosity

* Note F.

† Hume's History of England, ch. xxxvii.

often prevails between subordinate sects and parties which differ but little from one another, than between those which are more widely separated; and why rival factions in a state regard one another generally with deadlier hatred than rival nations. The reason is, that party feelings, whether of attachment or hatred, become weakened in proportion as they are diffused. The idea of self is always most easily and closely associated with those who are most immediately connected with us. The individuals of different nations or widely separated sects are seldom brought into comparison with one another; it is with those who are removed from us by smaller differences that we more frequently measure ourselves, and towards them that the feelings of rivalry are chiefly entertained. The glory or superiority of our country is shared with so many, that it affects us but feebly in comparison with the glory or superiority of our political or religious party; and the interest which we feel in our party is also inferior to that which we feel in the smaller circle of our more immediate connexions. And as our personal rivalships and animosities are the most vehement of all, so it is natural that those which approach nearest to such as

are personal, should excite the most lively feelings.

Opposed to these vices of Bigotry and Party-spirit are the virtues of *Liberality* and *Moderation.* Liberality consists in allowing to others the full liberty of judging for themselves; and this not merely in words, which none can refuse to do, but in spirit; that is, it consists in being free from all desire to dictate to another what he shall believe, and from all resentment or hostility towards him on account of a difference of sentiment. Moderation (in that more limited sense in which the term is here employed) consists in being free from all inordinate zeal, and from all the undue bias and unreasonable prejudices of party. These two qualities are evidently very nearly allied, and for this reason may be treated of jointly. They both imply that enlargement of mind, which disposes and enables a person to contemplate a subject in every point of view, and to perceive what may be said on both sides of any disputed question; together with that sense of equity which will lead to the ready acknowledgement of whatsoever this enlarged judgment may dictate. Bigotry, as already observed, always

argues a contracted mind, a mind incapable of taking an enlarged survey, and habituated to one train of thought, beyond which it cannot range. It is found, accordingly, to prevail most where there is the greatest ignorance; for ignorance excludes doubts, by removing out of view those difficulties or opposing arguments, with which better information or fuller inquiry would have moderated the confidence of opinion.* The man of enlightened mind cannot well be a bigot or a violent partisan, because he knows and can duly appreciate the arguments which may be brought against his own opinions; and even though this knowledge may only tend to confirm his own opinions, it will nevertheless dispose him to regard with less astonishment the different sentiments of others, because it will reveal to him the sources of their errors, and the causes of their misdirected zeal. A man of this frame of mind has evidently little community of feeling with the violent partisan, and is altogether unfit to serve the purposes of a party. Seldom, indeed, does he rank himself with any party, because he can seldom entirely adopt the sentiments of any class of men, but thinking for himself, he forms

* Note G.

a system of his own, which probably coincides not exactly with any prevailing system. Or if he do see reason to unite himself with that party whose sentiments approach the nearest to his own, he cannot, however, become so blind an adherent, as to join in its excesses and adopt its prejudices. He cannot so far surrender his reason, as to go all lengths with the more violent of his party; he cannot so far contravene the dictates of equity, as to allow neither common sense nor common honesty to those who differ from him. For this reason he is often stigmatized by zealots as a trimmer or a time-server, and regarded with suspicion even by those of his own party as a doubtful or a lukewarm friend. But he is elevated above the contempt of zealots and the coldness of bigoted partisans, by the dignified consciousness which he feels of superior enlargement of mind, and freedom from all their narrow prejudices.

There is, however, a spurious liberality or moderation, which we must be careful to distinguish from the genuine virtue, as it arises from mere indifference to the subjects of dispute. The man who never troubles his head about religion, will of course take no interest

in the religious questions which so much divide the opinions of mankind, and will consequently show no partiality to one sect more than to another He, in like manner, who has no taste for politics, and pays no attention to public affairs, will be equally disposed to be friendly with men of all parties. But the moderation which thus springs from mere indifference, is evidently not entitled to the name of a virtue, since the same man who is thus liberal on some points, may evince, on others in which he feels more deeply interested, the most violent spirit of intolerance. Nay, his indifference itself may afford ground for bigotry of a certain kind, by leading him to feel contempt for all who attach importance to that which he neglects.*

The praise of liberality is also falsely claimed on the ground of certain tenets respecting future salvation. To believe that all mankind are alike regarded with favour by the Almighty, and are alike admissible to future happiness, to whatsoever religious denomination they may belong—this is called being liberal: while all who maintain that future salvation depends in

* See Aikin's Letters to his Son. Vol. i. p. 95.

any way on modes of faith, are frequently on this sole ground denounced as bigots. It is true, indeed, that those exclusive creeds which thus limit the favour of the Almighty, have all originated from the spirit of bigotry, and are such as a truly liberal mind will always feel extremely repugnant to admit. Nevertheless the admission or rejection of such creeds ought by no means to be considered as an infallible test of liberality. A man may be bigoted, who holds what is usually called a liberal creed; and one, on the other hand, who professes a narrow and exclusive creed, may have the dispositions which constitute a liberal character. The former, while he believes that all men may be saved, and professes to allow to every one the fullest liberty of private judgment, may nevertheless in his heart feel that contempt for those who differ from him, and that disposition to regard them, though not avowedly, as either fools or knaves, which are surer tokens, than any speculative tenets, of a bigoted mind. The latter, while he thinks himself compelled, by incontestable authority, to believe that all but those of a certain faith will be excluded from the happiness of futurity, may show meanwhile that he has a heart far better than his

creed, by his unfeigned pity for those whom he imagines to incur this danger, and his perfect freedom from all insulting, angry, or triumphant feeling towards them.

Arguments to enforce this virtue may be derived both from its conformity with truth and reason, and from the consideration of its good effects.

Considering the unavoidable nature of those diversities of sentiment which prevail in the world; how variously the minds of men are formed by natural constitution, how still more variously modified by different circumstances of life and education; how strong, moreover, is the force of habit in deeply rooting in the mind those principles which early instruction has implanted; no man can reasonably be surprised or irritated, that his opinions, however incontrovertible they may appear to himself, should be called in question by others. Considering also the acknowledged fallibility of human judgment, and the great variety of opinions which subsist even among the most enlightened of mankind, it is plainly the height of presumption in any one, however superior his talents or

extensive his learning, to set up his own opinion as a standard for the opinions of others. No one, indeed, but a pope, would ever venture openly to assert so arrogant a pretension; but such is *virtually* the pretension of the intolerant bigot. The truly liberal man not only acknowledges, but feels his own liability to error. He remembers how many there are of the wise and good who differ from him; and how often he has found occasion to differ from himself: he reflects that while he sees so many others misled by early prepossessions, he may himself be similarly biassed; and however firm may be his own convictions, he cannot reckon so confidently upon their truth, as to think that he and his party monopolize all common sense, nor be surprised or irritated at the pertinacity of others in adhering to their own opinions.—Such reflections, however, it should be observed, may possibly be pushed too far; and some there are, though the number is small, and the danger not much to be feared of erring thus, who, on the ground of that infinite diversity which exists in the opinions of men, resign all confidence of judgment, and consider truth as altogether uncertain and hopeless of attainment. This is surely neither a desirable nor

a reasonable state of mind. Though it is right to moderate our confidence of opinion by considering the number and weight of those who differ from us, yet it is obvious that the prejudices of the ignorant ought not to weigh against the knowledge of the enlightened. The opposing opinions of those who have taken no pains to investigate truth, ought not to diminish the confidence of those whose convictions are founded on diligent inquiry and patient research. And though even among the enlightened and inquiring there is by no means an entire agreement of opinion, yet this diversity will not be found to affect in any considerable degree the truths of greatest practical importance. On all the fundamental doctrines of religion and morality, there is both sufficient evidence to lead to truth, and sufficient concurrence of sentiment among mankind, to warrant the utmost confidence of decision and the warmest zeal in its behalf.* And this confidence and zeal may be felt consistently with the most perfect liberality. For while we warmly espouse that system of religion which we believe to be founded in truth, and important to the best interests of mankind, we may still regard with brotherly kindness those who

* Note H.

espouse a different faith. We may be friendly to their persons, while we are hostile to their opinions. Believing them to be in error, we may yet exercise indulgence and charity towards their prejudices. Wishing to convince them of their mistake, we may yet employ no weapons but those of fair and friendly argument. This, indeed, is the only method of persuasion likely to prove effectual, and herein consists a further recommendation of liberality founded on its evidently useful tendency. That intolerance uniformly operates against itself, and rouses stubborn opposition where it seeks to force assent, is a truth which the annals of persecution confirm in almost every page. But to estimate justly the benefits of liberality, we must consider not merely the inefficacy of intolerance, but the dreadful positive mischiefs which bigotry and party-spirit have brought upon mankind; how they have prompted to the relentless exercise, upon victims who deserved far different treatment, of cruelties at which imagination shudders; how they have rent nations with the fiercest factions; how they have brutalized the human heart, and rendered man the deadliest enemy of man. Scenes, indeed, like those alluded to, are happily

now of rare occurrence; but the spirit of bigotry still operates, and its effects are still seen in the mutual animosity of sects and parties; in the coldness and estrangement so often produced among friends or neighbours by a difference of sentiment; and in the injustice which so grossly blackens the character and misinterprets the motives of those who venture to impugn established prejudices. Diversities of opinion, we know, must ever prevail, so long as human nature continues what it is; but let the spirit of liberality reign, and they will prove no hinderance to the mutual interchange of good offices and friendly feelings. And how much more joyous an aspect would human society assume, how many unjust prejudices would be corrected, and how many obstacles to the progress of truth be removed, could men of different sentiments lay aside their animosities, and mingle freely in amicable intercourse!

CHAP. VII.

DUTIES RELATING TO THE AFFECTIONS.

ANOTHER class of natural principles which it is the object of moral science to regulate, is that which consists of what are usually termed the *Affections*. They are distinguished from our desires by having for their objects *persons* instead of *things*. Some writers include under the term Affections all the feelings of whatever kind with which we may regard the persons of one another, and accordingly divide them into the two classes of Benevolent and Malevolent Affections. It seems to me, however, more agreeable to common usage to restrict the term Affections to feelings of a benevolent character, and to include feelings of an opposite character under the denomination of Passions. Be this, however, as it may, it is only of the former class that I now design to treat. The origin and formation of these Affections has already been treated of in the Theory of Morals. Our sole business now is to consider them in a prac-

tical view, and to learn the proper method of regulating and governing them.

1. AFFECTIONS OF KINDRED.

The affections of kindred may lead to error by either their excess or their deficiency. When these affections are carried to excess, they lead to that fond indulgence in parents, which renders them loath to impose the least restraint on the inclinations of their children; and to that blind partiality among relatives generally, which causes them to foster the prejudices, to soothe the pride, and thus to retard, rather than promote, the moral improvement of each other. Excessive attachment among the members of a family has also the effect of rendering them too indifferent towards the rest of the world. While they see nothing but excellences in one another, they are apt to run into the opposite extreme in their judgment of all who are beyond that narrow circle within which their affections are confined. Domestic tastes and attachments are, to a certain extent, highly amiable, and highly conducive to happiness; but it is by no means right that all our regards should be exclusively centred in home. Some regard is surely due

to our neighbours and acquaintances; some to our country; some to the unfortunate, however little connected with us, whom we may have the power to serve. It is allowable, because it is natural, that family attachments should predominate over our regard to neighbours or strangers; but when carried to such an extreme as to exclude or too much weaken this regard, they deserve to be considered as little better than a refined selfishness. That social disposition which leads a man to cultivate a somewhat extended acquaintance; that public spirit which prompts him to take an interest in the prosperity of his town or country; and that benevolence which finds occupation in relieving the wants or instructing the ignorance of those within its sphere of action; are surely qualities highly useful and ornamental, and perfectly compatible at the same time with a reasonable attachment to relatives, and a reasonable predilection for domestic enjoyments. Contracted intercourse and experience cannot fail to foster prejudices; and as there are prejudices of country, prejudices of party, and prejudices peculiar to certain classes and stations, so there are also family prejudices, which nothing but an extended intercourse with society can remove.

The error arising from the excess of these affections will be yet greater, if to this excess be added partiality. A parent may from various causes contract an exclusive attachment for one of his children; but unless this partiality rest on the ground of superior worth, it is obviously his duty not to manifest or yield to it; for unjust preference never fails to sow the seeds of jealousy and discord among brethren, and to alienate from a parent the affections of his injured children.

Thus it appears that, notwithstanding the amiable and benevolent character of the affections of kindred, they require, not less than the active principles already considered, restraint and guidance. Their excesses, however, are not so mischievous, as the excesses of those desires which are purely selfish; and they are accordingly regarded with greater indulgence, being looked upon, not as odious vices, but merely as venial, if not amiable, weaknesses. Not so, however, their absence, or deficiency; for the total want of these affections always justly shocks us as vicious and unnatural; and except in some peculiar cases, where long absence, parental severity, or fraternal unkind-

ness, has checked their growth, may always be considered as a proof of a cold and selfish heart. If such a heart be not incapable of other virtuous feelings, or if the case should occur, which is not impossible, of a person conscious to himself of this defect and desirous of repairing it, to him I would say, Be not discouraged, if you find that you cannot, by an effort of reason, implant in your breast affections which nature or circumstances have denied; but remember that, in proportion as you want the stimulus of natural affection to the performance of those duties which you owe your relatives, you will require a stronger principle of duty to supply its place. And by thus fulfilling your part from conscientious motives, you will acquire perhaps a better title to esteem, than if you had been solely actuated by natural affection.

2. FRIENDSHIP.

The ancient moralists attached the highest value and importance to virtuous friendship, and have exhausted all their eloquence in its praise; but their eulogies require perhaps some qualification. To be susceptible of a warm attachment, is certainly some ground of praise;

and we may not unjustly augur ill of those who are utterly incapable of friendship. Yet that devoted and exclusive attachment between two individuals, which has been painted in such glowing colours of panegyric, appears, when brought to the test of sober reason, by no means deserving of the praises lavished upon it, being liable to the same objections which have been urged against a similarly exclusive attachment among kindred. Friendship, indeed, as it is commonly pourtrayed by ancient moralists, and modern writers of fiction, is seldom, if ever, found realized in actual life. By young persons, indeed, of romantic character, friendships are frequently formed, which for a time are maintained with great enthusiasm, and appear to the attached individuals incapable of change or dissolution; but growing reason, or altered circumstances soon dispel the illusion, and by teaching that there is no such thing in human life as faultless excellence, prove how visionary is that idea of perfect friendship which youthful imagination had fondly pictured. There is no individual who is deserving of unmixed esteem, or exclusive love. In the circle of our acquaintance we may all be able to enumerate several,

whom on various grounds we judge deserving of esteem, but whose comparative worth it is not possible to determine, and whose several excellences are all accompanied by failings which must qualify our regard. Reason, therefore, obviously dictates, that our regards should not be confined to one, but shared among several,* and that rarely should unlimited confidence be imparted to any. Unlimited confidence should generally, I think, be restricted to the domestic circle. Home is the proper scene of the best and truest friendship. "Family friendships," it has been justly observed, "are the friendships made for us by God himself."† A wife, a husband, a parent, a brother, a sister,—if we have any of these relationships, and yet complain that we want a friend, either we are peculiarly unfortunate in our domestic connexions, or there is something wrong, or something wanting, in ourselves, which unfits us for all attachment. As it is both natural and desirable, however, to contract friendships or acquaintances of greater or less intimacy beyond the circle of our domestic connexions, it is an important part of moral duty to render

* Note I.

† Mrs. Chapone's Letters on the Improvement of the Mind. Letter V.

these friendships or acquaintances, as much as possible, subservient, or at least not detrimental, to our moral improvement. So much depends, more particularly in the case of the young, upon making a proper choice of associates, that caution on this subject cannot be enforced too strongly. The powerful influence of example is a topic of common remark, and on the young that influence is peculiarly strong, by reason of their acute sensibility to honour and reproach. Nothing, therefore, is more important for their future welfare, than that they should exercise the utmost prudence in the choice of their associates; that they should not implicitly follow those first dictates of partiality which are often founded on the most deceitful appearances or delusive fancies, but examine well the character of all they meet with, and form no intimacies with any whose conduct or whose principles may mislead them from the path of virtue.

3. PATRIOTISM.

The affection of Patriotism, like that of Friendship, was a subject of high eulogium to the ancient moralists, in whose system of duty

it held the highest rank. This high esteem, however, is certainly not due to it under all the forms it may assume. That mere natural predilection which we feel, from the influence of association, for the place of our nativity or early residence, or that slight involuntary preference with which, from the connexion with self, we regard our own country as compared with others, is evidently entitled to no praise. And if this feeling amount to a blind and bigoted prejudice in favour of our own country, leading us to undervalue and despise every other, and to lose sight of every principle of justice or humanity, where its glory or interest is concerned, it is not only no virtue, but a very absurd and reprehensible weakness. Then only can Patriotism be allowed to rank among the virtues, when it leads us to consult for the welfare of our country on enlarged principles, and with a due regard for the rights of other nations. To divest ourselves of all partiality towards a country which comprises all our dearest connexions, which contains the scenes of our early residence, with whose language, laws, and history we are so familiar, and in whose liberty and welfare we ourselves are personally interested, is neither practicable nor desirable.

It is an allowable, because a natural feeling. But this ought not, surely, to render us blind to what is faulty in its government or defective in its institutions; this ought not to render us insensible to what is superior in the character or laws of other nations; still less should it lead us to seek the aggrandizement of our own country at the expense of others. No man who wishes his feelings to be under the guidance of reason, will desire to be subject to any such narrow prejudices or unjust partialities. At the same time it is proper that every one who possesses the means of extensive usefulness, should make the good of his own country the primary object of his exertions, for this obvious reason, that his own country is the sphere where his benevolence can be exercised with the greatest effect. The influence of every individual, however high in power or distinguished by talents, is necessarily confined within very narrow limits; and supposing it, therefore, possible, which it scarcely is, that any one should have attained to such enlarged benevolence of character, as to be equally disposed to serve his brethren of mankind in every region of the world; yet as means and opportunities rarely occur of benefiting those in distant regions, his

own country, which is near at hand, and most within his power to serve, will on that ground justly claim his chief exertions.*

4. GRATITUDE.

This affection is so natural an effect of the laws which govern the human mind, that as was observed of the domestic affections, there appears far more criminality in the want of it, than merit in feeling it. Few vices, indeed, have been more severely condemned, or painted in more odious colours, than ingratitude; so that it has been even said, and the remark is now grown trite,

> He that's ungrateful has no fault but one;
> All other vices are but virtues in him.

Without adopting such exaggerated terms of censure, it may yet be remarked, that to be altogether unmoved by genuine kindness; to feel no desire to make a return for benefits received, except with the hope of future benefits from the same source; is certainly a proof of a cold, interested, and selfish heart, which we

* See some very sensible remarks on the subject of Patriotism in Aikin's Letters to his Son. Vol. i. Letter 27.

should judge capable of almost any baseness. At the same time it should be observed, that the bitter complaints, which we so often hear, of ingratitude, are in many cases without foundation. Benefactors are apt to set too high a value on the services they confer, and to form unreasonable expectations of thankfulness and subservience in those whom they have obliged. Not finding those expectations answered, they complain loudly of ingratitude, when the fault in truth rests solely with themselves. Favours, moreover, are sometimes conferred with such an ostentatious air of condescension, with such an evident desire to make the obligation felt in all its magnitude, as renders them neither deserving of gratitude, nor capable of exciting it.

The affection of gratitude seems, at first view, hardly capable of the error of excess. It may, indeed, mislead the judgment by creating too partial an opinion of its objects; but this will appear an error on the right side, undeserving of the slightest censure, and unattended with any material danger. Nevertheless it may in some cases require to be restrained. It may render us too subservient to the wishes of our benefactors. It may lead us to take part in

their unjust prejudices, and unreasonable partialities; to love whom they love, and hate whom they hate, for no better reason than their example. One half, perhaps, of that improper influence which is exercised by the wealthy and powerful over their inferiors, may be attributed to the misguided gratitude of the latter, rendering them reluctant to oppose the wishes of those, who, perhaps, with the expectation of this subservience, have done them acts of kindness. He who wishes to be independent, will be cautious, in the first place, of incurring obligations, which may afterwards thus fetter his freedom of action. But if, after having incurred them, he finds it attempted to employ them as a means of improper influence, he will indignantly resist the attempt, regardless of the dictates of gratitude, or rather rightly judging that, by this discovery of his benefactor's motives, all claim to gratitude is annulled. It may be added, that though there is nothing highly meritorious in that natural feeling which benefits commonly excite in all but the basest minds, yet when gratitude survives after long intervals of time, or testifies itself by difficult exertions or costly sacrifices, it justly claims in that case our warmest admiration.

5. SYMPATHY.

The next benevolent affection which claims our attention is Sympathy, or the disposition to share in the feelings, whether of joy or sorrow, which we witness or imagine in others. In tracing the history of this affection, I have already mentioned and explained that morbid sensibility, which is unable to endure the sight of pain and misery. This is evidently a weakness, which, however amiable it may appear in the eyes of those who are subject to it, is altogether selfish in its character, and productive of conduct the very reverse of what true benevolence would dictate, since it prompts them to avoid the distress which they might relieve, or deprives them of all self-possession and power of action at the moment when their exertions are needed most.

Others, again, are so much led away by their feelings of compassion, that they disregard all prudential considerations, and by the lavish and indiscriminate manner in which they bestow their bounties, both exceed the limits of proper economy, and throw away their charity upon unworthy objects. Even justice is some-

times violated at the instigation of these feelings; for there are persons who cannot withhold from the objects of their compassion, though their generosity may deprive them of the means of answering claims of a far more urgent nature, thus exhibiting the strange inconsistency of injuring some by the very means which they take to benefit others. Hence the common maxim, "Be just, before you are generous," is far from being in all cases a needless admonition.

The feelings of sympathy, moreover, are often considered more meritorious than they really are; and as they sometimes manifest themselves in men of otherwise very depraved character, they are too often employed to palliate guilt and to cover a multitude of sins. The votary of dissipation may revel to any excess in sensual pleasures, may waste his substance, impair his health, involve his family in ruin, and lead others by his example into similar guilt; yet if he can melt at a tale of woe, if he occasionally drops the tear of compassion, or performs, from some momentary impulse of feeling, an inconsiderate act of generosity, he fondly concludes, that he has a good heart, and

this is sufficient in his idea to atone for all his failings. A more mistaken notion cannot enter into the mind of man. For what is that sympathy on the ground of which so much merit is claimed, but a natural affection, which rises as spontaneously, and results as little from reason and reflection, as any other of the passions of our nature? And if it be not guided by reason and reflection, if it remain a mere blind impulse, having no steady and enlightened aim, and employing no judicious means for the attainment of its objects, wherein is it superior in moral worth to any other natural propensity? These kind affections, it is true, when well directed, are far more noble and important in their character, than those passions, however governed, of which selfish gratification is the object; but disinterested as they appear, they are often found to coexist with dispositions of the most malignant nature, and the same heart which dissolves this moment with the tenderest feelings of pity, may kindle the next with the fury of resentment, or swell with the triumphs of pride.

Excessive sympathy is the source also of that weakness of character which consists in being

too backward to give pain. This, it is obvious, is sometimes a duty of imperative obligation; for who can pass through life, and mingle in its active concerns, without being frequently called upon to resist unreasonable wishes, to rebuke misconduct, or enforce compliance with just commands? This cannot always be done without wounding, and sometimes deeply wounding the feelings of others, and there are some whose sympathy with those feelings is so strong as to overpower their sense of duty. Such persons are incapable of duly exercising their own authority. They cannot bring themselves to utter the painful reproof, however justly it be deserved and urgently required. They cannot enforce their reasonable injunctions, or exercise a proper restraint, even when the welfare of those subjected to their authority is at stake. This disposition, though honoured with the name of good-nature, is certainly not to be desired or commended; and however amiable it may sometimes appear, it is a weakness, which renders the character unmanly, contemptible, and altogether unfit for much of the active business of life.

Such are the faults which arise from sympa-

thy ill-directed or excessive. The entire want of this affection constitutes a character of deeper criminality, as it argues a thoroughly selfish heart, and leads to that most odious of all vices, cruelty.

Under proper regulation, however, the sympathetic affections form a most valuable and beautiful ornament of character. A principle, indeed, of duty may do much without their aid; it may not only restrain us from all acts of injury to the property, the persons, or the character of others, but may lead to the practice of a useful, and highly judicious beneficence. Yet if sympathy be wanting, beneficence will be without its best grace, and the principle of duty will fail to produce a conduct altogether unexceptionable. This will appear from considering somewhat more at large the several effects of sympathy upon the social conduct.

1. Sympathy softens the asperities of opposition and authority. It is often, as we have just observed, necessary for the due discharge of duty, to enforce our own determinations in opposition to the will of others, and to give pain by deserved reproof, or by just, but dis-

agreeable injunctions. But there are two ways of doing this; and men of strong and energetic character, if destitute, as is perhaps too commonly the case, of sympathy, are too apt to carry every thing with a high hand, and to neglect the gentler methods of persuasion and conciliation. Their firmness is liable to degenerate into stern inflexibility; their exercise of authority, into tyranny and cruelty. But he who blends with a due degree of firmness that disposition which is ever ready to consult the wishes and feelings of others; who unites, (to use the language of Lord Chesterfield,) the *suaviter in modo*, with the *fortiter in re*, will so soften the rigour of authority, and the harshness of opposition, as to render them less offensive, without at all diminishing their effect. If he has occasion to command, he will not do it with that harsh tone and imperious manner, which can only excite disgust and produce a sullen and constrained obedience, but with that dignified mildness which it will be a pleasure to obey. If he has occasion to rebuke, it will not be with that rough severity or cruel sarcasm, which is sure to rouse a spirit of resentment, and so to defeat its own end, but in those terms of calm displeasure and mild ex-

postulation, which seldom fail to subdue the most perverse and stubborn heart. If he is engaged in any undertaking, which, to be conducted with success, requires him to encounter many opposing interests and opinions; instead of multiplying the number of his opponents and provoking them to more determined hostility, by his domineering air, and his rough, unaccommodating measures; he listens to all objections, endeavours, by rational argument or mild persuasion, to remove prejudice, is willing to bend and comply in matters of small moment, which do not much effect his main object, and resorts to open and determined struggles only when every conciliatory measure has failed.

2. Sympathy, moreover, creates peculiar alacrity to offices of kindness, and gives them a peculiar charm. A principle of duty may incite us to aim at doing good by all the means within our power; but if sympathy be wanting, the impulse will be often feeble, the effort languid, and the benefit conferred imperfect. But the man who is actuated by a feeling heart, as well as by a principle of duty, is prompt and ardent in rendering his aid to the wretched,

because he enters completely into their feelings, and fully knows the bitterness of their hearts. He justly conceives the earnestness of those desires with which the wretched look around them for relief, and the bitter disappointment which they experience, when those from whom they hoped for succour, only come to gaze upon them, and then pass on unmoved. He understands the full meaning of the supplicating eye, and the still more eloquent language of the tear of gratitude. To such appeals he cannot be insensible. As strongly as he, if himself in adverse circumstances, would *desire* relief, so strongly does he feel impelled to *offer* it, whenever the opportunity and the power are afforded to him. He adds, moreover, to his benefits a tenfold value, by the manner in which they are bestowed. The wounded spirit feels his care, not less than the injured frame, or the destitute condition; and as the oil and wine of the good Samaritan to the lacerated body of the perishing victim of violence, so do his words of consolation descend with healing influence upon the rended heart of the despairing mourner. No ostentatious display of generosity, no attempt to enhance the magnitude of the benefit conferred, ever wounds the feelings

of the object of his kindness. He is anxious rather to lighten than augment the painful burden of obligation, rather to undervalue than to exaggerate the importance of his services. He anticipates the wishes of the unhappy before they are expressed; he reads in their looks those wishes which they are backward to express; he shows, in short, in all his language and behaviour, that kind commiseration for their sorrows, and that delicate attention to their feelings, which adds to his benefits a value not to be estimated by their pecuniary amount, and excites a feeling of attachment and gratitude far beyond what wealth and power alone are able, by the most costly gifts, to purchase.

3. Sympathy, lastly, is the source of that *delicate propriety of behaviour*, that *gentleness* and *genuine politeness* of manner, which adds so peculiar a charm to the social character. Persons may not unfrequently be found, who, though actuated by good principles, and deserving upon the whole of high esteem, yet, by their want of these qualities, create annoyance and incur dislike in every society into which they enter. Without the most distant

intention to offend, they yet frequently render themselves the objects of displeasure, by their inattention to the feelings or wishes of those with whom they associate. They obtrude themselves, it may be, at times or in places where their company is unacceptable. They engross conversation, without considering that others may wish to have their share. They advance their own opinions with offensive arrogance, or treat the opinions of others with a contempt which cannot fail to irritate. Sometimes they weary their auditors by disgusting egotism; sometimes by heedless raillery they deal around them pangs of which they little think, or by an indiscriminate bluntness of speech, without consideration of time, or place, or circumstance, they sport with feelings, the nature of which they cannot comprehend. The reason is that they are wanting in that sensibility which would give them an entrance into the hearts of others, and create a nice perception of their wishes and feelings. The man of sympathizing heart cannot fall into errors like these. Accustomed to transfer himself into the situation of others, and to consider their circumstances not less than his own, he seeks to adapt himself, so far as is reasonable, to their accommodation.

Alive not less sensibly to their feelings than to his own, he avoids all needless causes of offence. With a sagacity peculiarly his own, he finds in every breast the chords which jar, and touches them, if touch them he must, with a gentle hand. No selfish liberty of speech, no vain desire to display his powers of wit, will ever lead him to sport with another's feelings, or rudely to open in his breast the sources of painful reflection. Let it not, however, be supposed, that this sympathizing disposition will necessarily render us incapable in any circumstances of saying or doing what will occasion pain. This may be the tendency of the disposition in those who possess it naturally; but this is its blamable extreme, which they should guard against with the greatest care. The firmness to act, where duty requires it, in opposition to the wishes of others; the courage to speak unpalatable truths, where vice demands correction and rebuke, are certainly qualities for the want of which nothing can compensate. But they are qualities by no means incompatible with a proper degree of regard for the feelings of others. For there is a wide difference between that selfish and obstinate sternness which bends in no degree to the accommodation of

others, and that mild and rational firmness which is exercised only as the ally and protector of virtue. There is a wide difference between that barbarous and unfeeling severity, which rudely reproaches and bitterly inveighs, and that calm, benignant courage, which resolutely, yet gently, administers reproof. Nor do these qualities differ less in their effects, than in their character. For while the one excites disgust and rouses every indignant feeling, the other commands attention and inspires respect. While unfeeling sarcasm and rude reproach serve only to provoke opposition and hatred, the calm remonstrance which is administered with delicacy and due consideration for another's feelings, is sure to be heard with deference, received with gratitude, and followed by contrition and amendment.

CHAP. VIII.

DUTIES RELATING TO THE PASSIONS, OR THOSE MORE VIOLENT PERTURBATIONS OF MIND, WHICH ARE EXCITED BY EVILS AND INJURIES.

THE active principles which have hitherto engaged our attention, are all characterized by having for their object, or their exciting cause, some *Good*, real or supposed. We enter now upon the consideration of that opposite class of feelings, the cause or object of which is *Evil*, real or supposed, and which, as I have before observed, it may not be improper to distinguish from our *Desires* and *Affections*, by the appropriate name of *Passions*. These may be arranged into three subordinate classes, according as the evils, which we fear or suffer, arise from *natural causes*, from *our own folly or misconduct*, or from *the agency of others*. We shall consider the rule of duty with respect to each of these three classes separately.

SECTION I.

OF THE EVILS WHICH ARISE FROM NATURAL CAUSES.

The first class of evils includes the various

natural calamities which are incident to our condition, such as disease and pain, poverty, the loss of friends by death or absence, the loss of property by various accidents, or the disappointment of our hopes and schemes by unforeseen occurrences. To show how such evils may best be borne or alleviated, is evidently an important topic of moral doctrine, since they are in a greater or less degree the inevitable doom of all, and all must sometime feel, if they feel not now, the want of support and comfort beneath their pressure. As our passions are excited not less by the prospect of *future*, than by the experience of *present* evil, a corresponding method may be adopted in detailing the rule of duty, and we shall accordingly consider, first, with what dispositions we should regard *future ills;* next with what dispositions we should regard the *ills that are present.*

1. With respect to future ills we may err in two ways,—in fearing them too little, and in fearing them too much. The first constitutes the errors of *imprudence*, *heedlessness*, and *rashness;* the other, those of excessive *anxiety* and *cowardice.* Some of the evils which spring from natural causes, we may, by proper pre-

caution, guard against, and either wholly or in part prevent; and to do so is the part of Prudence. But there are some persons so careless about futurity, that they are perpetually incurring evils, which, by a little foresight, they might have avoided. This is necessarily the case with very young persons, who are incapable, by reason of their little experience, of imagining the dangers which surround them, and whose light hearts are all engrossed by the enjoyments of the present hour. But the same disposition appears also in many persons of mature age, more particularly among the uninstructed poor, and uncivilized savages, who, unless when roused to action by pressing and immediate wants, are disposed to acquiesce with stupid listlessness in their present condition, and whose ignorant and contracted minds render them as incapable as children of extending their thoughts beyond the present hour.*

On the other hand, there are some who err in the opposite extreme;—who, not satisfied with taking prudent precaution against such

* On this trait of the savage character, see Robertson's History of America. Book iv.—(Works, Vol. ix. p. 89.)

evils as it is in their power to avoid, harass themselves with torturing anxiety about events which are altogether beyond their control, and augment the real ills of life by the added burden of imaginary dangers. In whatever condition such persons may be placed, however prosperous and secure their circumstances may actually be, they perpetually find some cause for apprehension and distress: their gloomy imaginations continually picture a thousand threatening forms of visionary evil, in apprehending which, they rob themselves of present comfort, and not unfrequently unfit themselves for present duties. Under the influence of this anxious temper, the tradesman dreads embarrassment and want in the midst of present abundance; the politician sees the ruin of his country impending in every crisis; the tender wife forebodes a widow's sorrows from every slightest variation of her partner's health; and the doating mother is distressed by every wind of heaven, lest it should visit the child of her fond hopes too roughly. The folly and unreasonableness of this anxious temper will appear from considering how little available it generally is to any useful purpose, and how much it needlessly augments that share of sorrow which nature

has allotted to our condition. For supposing that the evils which we dread were sure to happen, yet why imbitter our present comforts by dwelling upon the painful prospect? No fears or anxieties of ours can change the course of Providence. Why then should we thus antedate our doom, and extract a double portion of suffering from the unavoidable ills of human life?

But how frequently does it happen, in fact, that these weak apprehensions prove entirely groundless, or that the dreaded calamity is found far less terrible in reality, than it was in prospect! The experience of all will sufficiently confirm the truth of this remark. How often have we found that we could bear with calmness the misfortune which we previously imagined must drive us to despair! How often has the storm, whose black and lowering aspect filled us with dismay, blown off, and left us in undisturbed serenity! Contemplating an evil at a distance, we cannot be aware by how many circumstances it may be alleviated, by how many sources of comfort it may be attended. We see nothing in it but what is painful and alarming, and regard it consequently with

apprehensions, which are almost always found disproportionate to the reality. It is the tendency, also, of an over-anxious mind, not only to magnify future evils, but to overrate the probability of their occurrence. When agitated with the dread of some great calamity, we are not capable of judging fairly of the extent of our danger. To magnify danger is the natural tendency of fear, and when under the influence of this passion, we take no account of the chances which are against the occurrence of what we apprehend, and are apt to regard as absolutely certain that which is only probable or possible. Thus it is that our most distressing anxieties prove often in the event entirely groundless, and the evils to which we looked forward with hopeless dismay, never arrive.

The proper disposition with which to look forward to future evils, consists in a just medium between the foregoing extremes; that is, in guarding against them so far as is possible, with a wise precaution, without at the same time allowing the apprehension of them, particularly the apprehension of such as are entirely beyond our control, to destroy our present tranquillity. What prudence can do, let us do, to protect

ourselves against the casualties of life; but let us not imbitter the enjoyment of the present hour by ruminating upon all the countless possibilities of future evil. Wherever forethought can avail for our security, there let us not fail to exercise it; but with respect to all such events as neither our wisdom can foresee nor our agency alter, these let us leave to the will of Heaven, in the firm assurance that the affairs of the world, from the greatest even to the least, are all under the direction of an infinitely wise and good Being, who appoints to each his portion, and permits no evil but what is essential to the fulfilment of his benevolent designs. The grounds of this conviction, which is the best corrective of an over-anxious temper, will be more fully unfolded in a subsequent chapter.

Timidity or *Cowardice* is a weakness nearly allied to the foregoing, the only difference consisting in this, that it relates to evils or dangers more immediately impending. There is evidently a wide diversity in the degree in which different men are subject to the emotions of fear; and as this diversity appears not only in those who are advanced to maturity, but even in children of a very tender age, there is just

reason to believe, that it arises from some hidden diversities of bodily temperament or constitution. To explain the cause of this diversity, or to attempt the explanation, is the province of Physiology: the Moralist's more appropriate business is, to show, in this as in every other instance, the wrong tendencies of natural disposition, and to teach the most effectual means of obviating them. It must, however, be admitted that, with respect to the passion of fear, the moralist's persuasions seem almost powerless, when opposed to the influence of constitutional timidity. The paroxysms of terror create a temporary insanity, in which the mind is utterly deaf to reason and incapable of reflection; and he whose misfortune it is to be constitutionally subject to this passion, however much he may lament his weakness, and struggle against his feelings, can hardly hope by the influence of reason to acquire the courage of him whom nature has gifted with firmer nerves. But though the man of timid character cannot by the force of reason transform himself into a hero, he may yet do much towards saving himself from the errors, to which his weakness renders him liable. He must avoid, as much as possible, all those oc-

casions or pursuits, which are likely to expose him to personal peril. He must not needlessly embark in any undertaking, the difficulties and dangers of which he feels that he is not equal to encounter. He must not on any account affect, or aspire to gain the reputation of, courage; for such affectation will infallibly betray him into blunders, and only serve the more to expose his weakness. But while he thus takes prudent precautions to avoid as much as possible the occasions of trial, he must carefully prepare himself for encountering some trials to which his ordinary intercourse with society will unavoidably expose him; and as his fears of incurring the displeasure or enmity of men will render him peculiarly prone to servility, infirmity of purpose, and unlimited complaisance, if not occasionally to arts of dissimulation and cunning, in order to gain those ends which he dare not pursue by open means, it behoves him to be upon the strictest guard against these vices, and to cultivate for this purpose that regard to principle, and that love of integrity, which will render all such conduct more terrible in his eyes than any consequences to which an upright course might lead. *Civil courage*, as Miss Edgeworth somewhere

terms it, or that firmness which enables us to follow the dictates of duty, notwithstanding the censure, opposition, or enmity of men, is a quality which may in some degree be acquired by the exercise of reason, and which must indeed result from well-established principles of duty; and it is a species of courage evidently far more valuable, because more frequently required, and more to be depended on, than that mere *animal* courage or constitutional strength of nerve, which is chiefly displayed in sudden emergences of personal danger.—But as this topic has already been sufficiently discussed in a preceding chapter, I proceed to consider the rule of conduct with regard to *present evils.*

2. This has always been a favourite and frequent topic with moral writers, who have written line upon line and precept upon precept, to teach mankind the difficult task of patience under misfortune. The moralists of the Stoic school were particularly copious in exhortations and arguments upon this subject; but they evidently aimed too high. They inculcated such an absolute indifference about the events of life, as is altogether visionary and impracti-

cable. They maintained that pain is no evil; that the truly wise and virtuous man is superior to all the accidents of fortune, and wholly unconcerned about what may happen to him, being only solicitous to fulfil with propriety the part assigned him by Providence in the great drama of life, and satisfied with so fulfilling it, however humble or painful it may be. But such entire insensibility to evil, however pleasing in theory, is evidently incapable of being realized in practice. We cannot so far contravene our nature, as not to dislike and be desirous of escaping pain. We cannot attain such perfect indifference with respect to the usual objects of our pursuit and attachment, as to repress altogether the pang of sorrow which is occasioned by their loss. All that we can reasonably expect under such circumstances is, to tranquillize in some measure the agitated spirits; to sooth the inordinate vehemence of grief; to save the sufferer from sinking into despair, and to heal by degrees the wounded heart.

The tendency of the mind under the pressure of evil is to suffer the attention to dwell too much upon it, and to view it in an aggravated

light. We love to foster and prolong our grief, by recounting every circumstance which adds bitterness to our lot, and give ourselves up to fretful complaints and unavailing wishes, without endeavouring, by our own exertions, to remedy or remove the evil which distresses us. In some men we may observe an *habitual* tendency to this complaining temper, which leads them to find, even in a condition subject to no extraordinary amount of evil, sources of continual discontent. In whatsoever circumstances they are placed, and though not visited with greater sorrows than what are the ordinary portion of human life, they are ever complaining of the hardship of their fate. Overlooking all the blessings and advantages of their lot, they dwell only upon its evils, which they aggravate in their imagination to unreal magnitude, and are continually picturing to their thoughts some change or acquisition, which they fancy would satisfy their utmost wishes, and render them completely happy. The virtue opposed to this repining temper is *Contentment*, which by no means consists in being satisfied with our present condition in such sense as to have no wishes or desires of any kind; for to require this, would be to counteract the

strongest dictates of nature, and to take away the incitements to that activity, which is at once the best source of our happiness, and the appointed means of our improvement. There is deeply implanted in the human heart a propensity to look beyond what is present to something in prospect.

> Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
> Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest.

By this law of our nature, which it would be equally vain and unreasonable to oppose, new desires are perpetually springing in our minds. We feel in our present condition deficiences and wants which we cannot but wish to have supplied, and evils which we cannot but wish to remedy. Duty by no means requires us to suppress all such wishes, but only to restrain those fretful complaints and restless longings, which rob us of present comfort, without inciting us to useful exertion. It requires us to make the best of that condition, whatever it be, in which we are placed;—to look more at the advantages than at the evils of our lot; to enjoy, with a cheerful and thankful heart, the blessings we possess, and to bear with patience the troubles

which are allotted us, without magnifying our share of evil, without envying the condition of others, or indulging fruitless wishes for things beyond our reach. This constitutes contentment,—a virtue of no small importance to the happiness of life, and which may at once be recommended and inspired, by an enlargement upon the two following remarks; that no condition of human life will satisfy the wishes of a discontented mind; and that in almost every state there is enough to confer a moderate share of happiness, provided we make the most of its advantages.

To be convinced, first, that no condition of life will satisfy the wishes of a discontented mind, let us inquire, to what do those wishes tend? Ask the discontented man, what it is that he complains of,—what it is that he desires. He will say that he is annoyed by such and such evils, which he would fain be freed from; that he experiences certain wants, to satisfy which would render his happiness complete. Unreasonable man!—to expect that in a world like this, complete happiness should any where be found. Where is that condition of human life, which is entirely exempt from care?

Where is the man who will acknowledge that he is possessed of every thing his heart can wish? A state, indeed, of such entire exemption from evil is as little to be desired as expected, since it would be inconsistent with those beneficial purposes, which the evils of this state, as we shall hereafter endeavour to show, are designed and calculated to answer. In the mood of discontent, moreover, we always form a most erroneous estimate of that condition for which we sigh. We look only at its advantages, and never dream that those advantages may be counterbalanced by evils, from which we are now exempt; though certain it is, that evils of some kind we must encounter in every condition without exception. Change our state as often as we will, we cannot escape that portion of sorrow, which Providence in its wisdom has allotted to all the sons of men. And however gay and flattering the colours in which the object of our desire may now appear to us arrayed, experience, we may be assured, will dispel the illusion, and reveal the lurking thorn beneath the alluring flower. Many a condition which we regard with envy, is far, in fact, beneath our own in point of happiness; and such is our ignorance concerning good and

evil, that we oft pine for what would be to us a curse, and deprecate what would prove a real blessing. That wealth and distinction, which are so universally the objects of human pursuit, have proved a destructive snare to thousands, and many are the instances of those who have been undone by the fulfilment of their own mistaken wishes.—But the desires of the discontented man, even supposing him to be exempt from that share of evil which is usually allotted to every condition of human life, are in themselves incapable of being fully satisfied. He imagines, that, could he only be relieved from certain evils which annoy him, or attain some few particular objects of desire, he should not then entertain a wish for any thing beyond. Mistaken thought! The desires of the human heart, particularly those of the discontented heart, are so boundless, that no conceivable circumstances of life will suffice to satisfy them. The human mind is naturally of that restless temper, that it must have something to engage its wishes and pursuit. And should no real wants or ills exist, it would soon create imaginary ones, and make the merest trifles the objects of its hopes and fears. Let the discontented man, accordingly, have all his desires

gratified; let him be placed in a situation of the highest prosperity which his most sanguine wishes ever pictured; still he will find subjects of dissatisfaction and complaint. His desires will multiply in proportion as they are indulged; till at length he will suspend his happiness upon every trifle, or sigh for what is beyond the bounds of possibility.

The virtue of contentment will be yet more strongly enforced by the second observation which I proposed to illustrate, namely, that in almost every state of life there is enough to confer a moderate share of happiness, provided we be disposed to make the most of its advantages. There are, indeed, extreme cases of affliction, in which nothing beyond patient acquiescence can reasonably be expected. To these, which are cases of comparatively rare occurrence, the observation of course will not apply; but of the generality of mankind it may truly be affirmed, that, if they be disposed to appreciate duly the blessings they enjoy, they will find far greater cause for thankfulness, than for complaint. Evils, it is true, we all experience; but if, instead of confining our attention to these, we fairly take into our

account all the circumstances of our condition, we shall generally see reason to acknowledge that our comforts far outweigh our troubles, and that for every instance, on the one hand, of pain, or loss, or misfortune, we may count, on the other hand, many remaining blessings or material alleviations. In short there is no condition of life without its comforts. They may, indeed, be such as we are apt, from their commonness, to overlook and slight; but they are not on that account less really valuable in themselves.* And nothing would contribute more effectually to inspire us with a contented temper, than frequently to review the blessings with which we are favoured, and to compare our own light troubles with the far severer sorrows by which multitudes around us are afflicted. The truth is that the happiness of human life, though certainly affected much by external circumstances, depends in a far greater degree on the state of the mind. Universal experience abundantly proves that the mind of man can accommodate itself to its circumstances, and become in some measure the independent source of its own enjoyment. The object, then, at

* See Paley's Natural Theology. Chap. xxvi.

which we should chiefly aim, in order to ensure our happiness, is to regulate the dispositions of our hearts. To little purpose shall we labour, if we direct our attention exclusively to our external condition. In prosperous or adverse fortune, in high or humble station, our happiness will ever mainly depend on the prevailing temper of our minds. If this be of a gloomy and discontented cast, disposing us to look only at the dark side of our condition, to aggravate our troubles, to overlook our comforts, to envy the state of others, and to foster restless desires, and imaginary wants, we may rest assured that we shall never be happy in any circumstances. If, on the contrary, our temper be such as to dispose us to view our condition in the most favourable light, to think little of its evils, and to make the most of its advantages,—then may it be confidently affirmed, that seldom will any circumstances have power altogether to deprive us of enjoyment.

The virtue of Contentment regards only the ordinary ills of human life. Under circumstances of more severe and extraordinary misfortune, the virtue called for is that denominated *Fortitude.*

Of the calamities which befall us, though there may be some which admit of no remedy, there are others, and these perhaps the greater number, which may be repaired or alleviated by our own exertions. Under misfortunes of the latter class, the way of duty is clear, and its dictates cogent; for nothing can be weaker or more absurd, than to resign ourselves in such circumstances to unavailing sorrow, instead of immediately putting forth our efforts to seek the remedy which is within our power. Till this be done, patience is uncalled for and resignation itself is misapplied; for the ills of human life are evidently intended to rouse us to exertion, and to call forth our active powers; and, therefore, to be passively resigned to misfortunes which by our efforts we may remedy, is rather counteracting, than submitting to, the will of Heaven, and disguising with an appearance of piety, what deserves to be stigmatized as indolence and weakness. "God," says the proverb, "helps those that help themselves;" and they who prematurely seek from religion the relief which their own exertions may procure, should be reminded of the rustic in the fable, who earnestly besought the aid of Jupiter to extricate his waggon from the mire, but

received from the deity no other reply than a just rebuke for his laziness, and an injunction to put his shoulder manfully to the wheel. Few qualities of the human character are more beautiful to the moralist, or more useful to the possessor, than that *energy or elasticity of mind*, which rises with fresh vigour from the shock of misfortune; which never pauses to repine, but instantly looks round for new resources, and strenuously applies the means of reparation.* And be it observed, there are very few indeed of the misfortunes of life, which do not admit of reparation *in some degree*. We cannot, it is true, bring back from the grave the valued friend whom death has torn from our embrace; but have we no other objects of attachment to fill the void in our hearts? We may not be able to regain the affluence from which, by some stroke of unforeseen calamity we have fallen; but may we not at least contract our desires, and rest satisfied with the sufficiency, which industry will ensure, of all substantial comforts? We may be compelled by hard necessity to quit the country of our birth, and the scenes which a thousand pleasing associations

* See Aikin's Letters to his Son, Vol. ii. Letter 16, where this quality is finely pourtrayed.—See also Vol. i. Letter 19.

have rendered inexpressibly dear to our hearts; but though we can no where find the same delightful ties, we may yet adopt in some measure the country of our exile, and find fresh objects there of occupation and of interest. Thus may we, in many instances, alleviate by substitution the losses which we cannot entirely repair; and this course is as plainly the part of wisdom, as it is the certain indication of a strong mind.

But when we have done all we can to repair or remedy the misfortunes which we suffer, then, and not till then, commences the duty of *Patience*. Patience itself, indeed, may be considered as in some sort a remedy; since it consists in the exertion of self-command to divert the thoughts from the subject which distresses us. It is, as I have before observed, the tendency of our minds, when suffering under misfortune, to brood upon the thoughts of that misfortune, to review with perverse attention all its painful and aggravating circumstances, and thus to foster and prolong our sorrow. The virtue of Patience consists in strongly repressing this tendency; in exerting such power over our minds as to draw away the attention from the subject of our distress, and to divert

the current of our thoughts into another channel,—a task which certainly requires a strong effort to accomplish, but the accomplishment of which cannot fail to lighten considerably the load of sorrow. For this purpose *occupation* will always be found of very effectual service, because, by requiring our attention to be directed to other objects, it necessarily diverts our thoughts from the subject of our grief. At first, indeed, to the mind overwhelmed with deep affliction, occupation will be exceedingly irksome. Every pursuit or employment but that of ruminating upon its misfortune, will appear insipid.

> How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
> Seem to me all the uses of this world,—

will be the language of its feelings. But this repugnance to the ordinary occupations of life being once overcome, the mind will be by degrees diverted from its mournful ruminations; the gloom of melancholy will be gradually dispelled, and the sunshine of cheerfulness will brighten again the sufferer's path.

Of all the ills to which our nature is subject,

corporeal pain appears the least remediable, because it generally renders its victim incapable of active employment, and precludes him, therefore, from one chief source of relief. But even this evil may be considerably alleviated by that diversion of the attention to other subjects, in which we have represented patience to consist. For let us only consider of what amazing constancy human nature is capable. The history of religious persecution abounds with instances of men enduring the most frightful tortures, not merely with fortitude, but with triumph; acting as if regardless of the acutest agonies; embracing with apparent joy the instruments of execution, and singing hymns of exultation amidst consuming flames.* What can have produced this astonishing superiority to pain, which seems to realize the proud doctrine of the Stoics, but the powerful influence of some prevailing sentiment engrossing the whole attention of the mind, and rendering the sufferer regardless in a great measure of his actual sensations? These amazing efforts of human fortitude may often indeed have resulted from enthusiasm; but enthusiasm

* See, in particular, the account of Cranmer's execution. Hume's History of England. Chap. xxxvii.

does not act by miracle; and why should we suppose enlightened reason to be incapable of producing similar results? *Power over the attention* is the great thing requisite; and who knows to what extent this power may not be carried by early and assiduous cultivation?

Another important quality to be cultivated as a means of enduring evil, is *the disposition to hope the best* under all circumstances. It is sometimes the effect of extraordinary misfortune, to reduce the mind to a state of *Despair.* The sufferer in this case sees no possibility of ever repairing the loss which he has sustained, or escaping from the ills which distress him. He imagines that the same poignant feelings which he now experiences, must ever continue unchanged and unabated. All his prospects seem totally overcast. A settled melancholy invades his spirits, and sinking into listless apathy, he becomes incapable of exertion, indifferent to every pursuit, and almost regardless of surrounding objects. All hopes being thus shut out from life, and all interest in its affairs destroyed, existence itself becomes intolerably irksome, and no wish remains to the hapless sufferer, but speedily to find that last and

only refuge which death offers to the woes of mortals. To one in this unhappy state of mind the voice of moral admonition is seldom effectually addressed; but the truth is, that such utter abandonment of hope is rarely justified by the actual circumstances of the case. That there are situations which wholly exclude the hope of deliverance, is not to be denied; but let us not, when labouring under the pressure of misfortune, too readily believe that we are reduced to that extremity. However gloomy our prospects may appear, let us hope, if there be only a possibility of change.

> Beware of desperate steps: the darkest day,
> Live till to-morrow, will have passed away.

Events may soon take some more favourable turn; or in our present condition some fresh resources of happiness may be found, of which we are not yet aware. Human life is ever fluctuating, and as unforeseen calamity often surprises the prosperous, so unexpected light may arise to gladden those who are bewildered in darkness. This at least is certain, that we shall not *always* feel our misfortune with the same poignancy with which we feel it *now*.

"Time which on all things lays its lenient hand," will soon assuage the anguish of our grief. The mind will learn to accommodate itself to its circumstances. Sources of consolation will appear which we never imagined before, and the time will come when we shall look back with wonder at the despondence which now oppresses us.

There is another source of consolation in adversity to which I have not yet adverted;—I mean that which is derived from religious considerations. When all is done that lies in our power to remove or remedy the evils which distress us, or when the evils are such as we evidently cannot remedy, all that we can then do is to acquiesce; and nothing surely will better dispose us to this, than the conviction that whatever we suffer is appointed by a wise and benignant Providence, which consults in all its measures, not only for the general good, but for the highest welfare of every individual. The grounds of this conviction it will be our business hereafter to consider. At present I only state it as a source of most effectual consolation, the admission of which, if it do not exclude those active efforts which duty requires

in all cases where they are likely to be available, constitutes the virtue of *Resignation.*

But since patience and resignation are duties so difficult to practise, and afford in general such imperfect relief, why may not human nature be permitted to have recourse to that shorter and more effectual remedy for its griefs, which is found in death? This leads us to the important question of *Suicide*,—a subject which has given rise to much discussion, and concerning which the most opposite sentiments have been maintained. For though it is now generally regarded, where the plea of insanity cannot be urged in its excuse, as a crime of the deepest die, entailing infamy upon the memory of its author, yet in former times it wanted not advocates, by whom it was not merely allowed as the last resort of the wretched, but extolled as an act of heroism. The moralists of the Stoic sect distinctly recommend it as an act which under certain circumstances might become a duty, though it seems not easy to reconcile this doctrine with their elevated notions of entire submission to the appointment of Providence, and superiority to all external circumstances. "If your situation is upon the whole

disagreeable, if your house smokes too much for you," said the Stoics, "walk forth by all means. But walk forth without repining, without murmuring or complaining. Walk forth calm, contented, rejoicing, returning thanks to the Gods, who, from their infinite bounty, have opened the safe and quiet harbour of death, at all times ready to receive us from the stormy ocean of human life."* The inconsistency of this doctrine with other maxims of Stoic philosophy, and with all the principles of sound morality, is sufficiently manifest; for nothing can be plainer than that, if fortitude, patience, hope, and resignation be qualities justly deserving esteem, suicide, which can only arise from the excess of all the opposite qualities, is justly to be condemned. The truth however is, it is a deed to which the strongest propensities of our nature are so decidedly repugnant, that, whatever plausible arguments may be alleged in its defence, there is little danger of its ever being either generally approved, or frequently practised. The love of life, or the fear of death, and the disposition to look forward with hope into futurity, are principles so deeply inherent in human nature,

* Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments. Part vii. Sec. II. Chap. i.

that we cannot but impute some degree of mental derangement to those who are driven to commit this deed. And the fact, I am persuaded, is, that in the great majority of cases, it is truly the effect of some morbid state of body, producing a partial or temporary insanity, to which medical treatment, not moral admonition, is the proper corrective to be applied. In other cases, suicide is an act which we cannot well contemplate singly, because it is the result of previous crimes, with which we must connect it in our judgment, and the object of censure is not so much the act itself, as the predisposing causes which led to it;—as when the ruined gamester escapes by this means from the miserable consequences of his folly, or the malefactor, condemned to a public ignominious punishment, anticipates by his own hand the sentence of the law. In like manner, it is sometimes the result, not indeed of actual crime, but of some inordinate passion, which having first exceeded all the bounds of reason, and then being bereft or disappointed of its object, leaves in the mind a void which nothing can supply, and destroys all hope and interest in life; as when the phrensy of slighted love drives its hapless victim to fatal desperation,

or pride renders intolerable to the embarrassed merchant the prospect of impaired credit and diminished consideration in society. The despair which in such cases prompts to suicide, is so manifestly unreasonable, and implies such a totally perverted judgment and deluded state of mind, that no other consideration is wanted to show its utter inconsistency with virtue, and we regard it with a mingled feeling of pity and condemnation. Upon a mind thus situated arguments cannot be expected to have much influence. Seldom can we hope to irradiate by the light of reason that dismal gloom which its despair has drawn around it, or to chase away those frightful phantoms which have been conjured up by its distempered fancy. But supposing that we have to deal with one whose mind is not inaccessible to reason, the same arguments which have been already advanced to encourage hope and correct despair, will of course be applicable in dissuasion of an act which is the immediate offspring of despair. In addition to these arguments, let the consequences of suicide be fully considered, and, though we look no further than the present life, a darker criminality than that of folly will generally be found imputable to it. It is folly

with respect to the individual himself, unless all chance of deliverance from his sorrows were wholly excluded. But it is worse than folly, it is gross injustice and cruelty, when committed by one who leaves a circle of friends or relatives to mourn his untimely loss. Dead, indeed, must his heart be to every better feeling, who does not shrink from the bare imagination of a widowed wife, reproaching his memory for his base desertion; and is not moved from his purpose of destruction by the thought of abandoning in their helpless years, and leaving to struggle through the world unaided, those to whom his life, his cares, his faculties, belong by every sacred right. No weariness of life, no sufferings, however poignant, nothing short of absolute insanity, can excuse a deed like this, or save the memory of its author from the just execration of mankind.—But let us take for examination a case where such considerations are not applicable; the case of one who, while himself shut out from all hope of enjoyment, has no immediate connexions to mourn or suffer by his loss, or who is reduced to such a state, that even his fondest friends must wish for his death, as a kind release from hopeless and protracted suffering. In this case

considerations founded on a regard to the general interests of society can have no place; for he who is a burden to himself, can hardly be supposed capable of being serviceable to others, and if he were so capable, it seems unreasonable that society should require from any individual a continued endurance of a painful existence, for the sake of such insignificant services as he can render to the world. Nor can the deed in question be considered dangerous from the influence of example, or from its being a violation of a useful general principle; for so strong is the love of life in men, that even they who are weighed down with the infirmities of age, or oppressed with incurable disease, to whom death might be supposed a most welcome release, shrink from it with not less terror than the young and vigorous, and cling to life with unabated fondness even to the very last.* Without the expectation, therefore, of future existence, and the views and principles thereon founded, the most rigid moralist could hardly blame the man who should seek a refuge in death from irremediable suffering. But if it be, as we believe, the object of our present existence to form our character for future scenes,

* Note K.

and if all its sufferings are appointed by a wise and benignant Providence with a view to this great object, it is then our manifest duty to drink to the very dregs the cup of sorrow presented to us. With this belief, we must look upon life in a light in which we could not otherwise regard it;—as *a sacred trust which we are not at liberty to relinquish; as a post of duty which we cannot without guilt abandon.* To Him alone who bestowed it for such exalted and benignant purposes, belongs the appointment of its duration and its close.

SECTION II.

OF THE EVILS WHICH ARISE FROM OUR OWN MISCONDUCT.

The next class of evils which excite our passions, consists of those which we have brought upon ourselves by our own folly and misconduct. The passion excited by evils of this description is that of *Remorse* or *Self-reproach*, concerning which little can be said in the way of moral precept, as it is in itself a salutary feeling, prompting directly to the correction of the error which creates it, and requiring rather to be encouraged than restrained. There are certain tendencies and errors, however,

against which we should carefully guard, when suffering under evils of this description; and they are these—first, the attempt to pacify the reproaches of conscience by devising excuses or justifications of our guilt; next, the tendency to rest satisfied, with some transient feelings of self-reproach, without being stimulated by those feelings to the correction of our conduct; and thirdly, the proneness to mistake the evils which we have brought upon ourselves, for misfortunes arising from the course of nature. On the former two of these errors I shall not here enlarge, because they will more properly come under our review in a subsequent part of this treatise. With respect to the third, it is important to remark, that the instances of it are far more numerous than might at first be imagined, and include in fact a large proportion of those cases which excite our murmurs against Providence on account of the fancied hardship of our fate. It was long ago remarked by the royal moralist of Israel, that "the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord:"* and true it is, that in many instances we complain against Heaven on account of sufferings which nothing but our

* Proverbs xix. 3.

own misconduct has occasioned.* We call ourselves *unfortunate*, when we should say that we have been *imprudent;* and charge *fate* with the consequences of our own *thoughtlessness* or *folly*. The mischief arising from this error is great and obvious; for we are thus at once prevented from seeking the remedy which lies within our power, in the correction of the misconduct which has been the source of our distress; and are at the same time led to entertain injurious thoughts of Providence, and to imagine defects in the moral government of the world, which by no means really exist. The proper corrective of this error will be found in that strict and impartial self-examination, which will reveal to us the connexion, wherever a connexion subsists, between our sorrows and our sins, and point out the true remedy which such cases require.

SECTION III.

OF THE EVILS WHICH ARISE FROM THE AGENCY OF OTHERS.

We proceed now to consider the rules of conduct with respect to the third class of evils,

* See Blair's Sermons on the above text. Vol. iv. Sermon 14.—and Walker's Sermon on Discontent.

namely, those which arise, or are supposed to arise, from the agency of others. These may be arranged under the following heads.

1. Injuries or affronts proceeding from design;

2. Grievances occasioned by the misconduct of others, where there is no malevolent intention;

3. Dissensions arising from an interference of claims or pretensions, where each party thinks himself right;

4. Those imaginary or doubtful injuries, or those displeasing associations, which excite Suspicion, Jealousy, Envy, and unfounded Antipathy.

1. Injuries or affronts proceeding from design excite the passion of *Resentment*, which, besides creating, like the feeling of impatience under natural calamities, exaggerated conceptions of the evil which is suffered, prompts us to retaliate suffering upon the author of that evil. The due restraint of this passion constitutes the virtue of *Forgiveness*, which requires some explanation in order to be rightly under-

stood. The rule of moral duty cannot surely require that resentment should be altogether suppressed or eradicated; that no feeling of displeasure should ever be admitted towards those who greatly injure us; that no resistance should ever be offered to the unjust aggressions of unprincipled men, and no punishment of any kind inflicted on them. This would be to require impossibilities. This would be to attempt, not the reasonable regulation, but the entire extinction, of one of the most deeply implanted principles of human nature. Nay more; the duty, so understood and so acted upon, would strike at the very root of social order and social happiness. It would screen the unprincipled from many of those consequences of their guilty conduct, which, for their own good, it is desirable that they should experience, and expose the best of men, without defence, to all the wrongs and aggressions, which the evil passions of the former, thus let loose from all restraint, may be supposed capable of inflicting. With respect to those more flagrant injuries by which the security of our persons or property is invaded, or the confidence of our mutual dealings destroyed, it is obviously requisite for the very existence of

society, that these should with a strong arm be resisted and punished. But happily this task is not entrusted, in any well regulated community, to the discretion of the injured individual. He is of all persons the most unfit to undertake the exaction of that redress, which his wrongs, for the sake of the public welfare, require. Exasperated with resentment, and magnifying, from the natural influence of self-love, the enormity of the offence by which he suffers, he would be apt to set no limits to the severity of his retaliation; and punishment, as by him inflicted, would be, not that just and moderate chastisement which aims only at the reformation of the offender, or the prevention of future crime, but the fierce execution of a merciless vengeance, for no end beyond the torment of its victim. Nor would the mischief consist solely in this disproportion of the punishment to the crime, where the crime is indisputably real. Were every one to be at once the accuser, the evidence, and the judge in his own cause, it is easy to foresee that guilt and innocence would be in numberless instances confounded. Fancied injuries would be as often punished as acts of real injustice, and conduct the most meritorious, misconstrued by prejudice or pas-

sion, would not unfrequently receive the meed of crime. Happy, then, beyond a doubt, it is, that the power of punishing injuries of this description is not entrusted to the injured individual, but vested in that authority, which, while it is armed for this purpose with the collected strength of a whole community, is better fitted, by its general impartiality, to administer equal justice, and more disposed, by its dispassioned and enlightened judgment, to inflict such punishment, and such punishment only, as the public good requires.—But there are injuries which the law of the land cannot redress;—injuries which, though not of that palpable kind which affect our persons or our property, are often more acutely felt, and more bitterly resented. Why need I enumerate their various kinds and sources? Known, alas! too well to all are the pangs inflicted by the slights of pride, and the coldness of undeserved neglect; by hatred or prejudice unjustly entertained; by malice openly reviling, or secretly spreading the baneful venom of calumny;—

> The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of th' unworthy takes.

These are the injuries which come more properly within the scope of the moralist's admonitions, as being of much more frequent occurrence, and requiring, perhaps, more than the former, the alleviating spirit of forgiveness. In many instances, it should be observed, we imagine injuries of this kind to be offered, where none was really meant, or where the conduct which we consider injurious, appears perfectly justifiable to more impartial observers. The tendency of pride to invite affronts, and to produce a preternatural sensibility to the smallest slights, has already been pointed out;* and it is obvious that, if such be the source of the injuries complained of, the duty which they call for is not forgiveness, but the correction in ourselves of this wrong disposition. Supposing, however, our injuries to be real and unprovoked, what, let us consider, is the spirit with which it is best to meet them. To submit with perfect calmness to every insult; to regard those who unjustly hate, despise, or slander us, with the same feelings with which we regard the rest of mankind, is evidently more than either reason requires, or human nature allows us to expect. To be altogether insensible to feelings of

* Vol. I. p. 335.

resentment under circumstances of gross provocation, argues a certain meanness of spirit, which we cannot but despise. There is a calm and dignified displeasure, which, in such circumstances, is not only allowable, but commendable. There is a mode of coolly chastising insult or repressing petulance, which justly commands our admiration. But whenever our displeasure borders upon passionate resentment, or refuses to be mollified by the repentance or concessions of the offender; whenever our resistance or chastisement of injury goes beyond the strict necessity of the case, and degenerates into the mere retaliation of evil; the bounds of justice and duty are then transgressed. I say the bounds of *justice* are transgressed; for what is justice as respects the punishment of offences, but the principle which requires that a certain measure of suffering should be inflicted *with the sole view of preventing their recurrence.* To inflict suffering for no other reason than because an offence *has been* committed, without a view to any ulterior object, is mere vengeance or retaliation,—a principle which ought to be marked with the strongest censure, whether it operates in private or in public punishments; whether acted upon by men, or ascribed,

in their systems of theology, to the great Supreme. It can be no other than a selfish or malignant feeling, which prompts to the infliction of suffering for its own sake. Whenever, therefore, feelings of sincere contrition are manifested, the end of punishment is in general already attained, and he who, not satisfied with that contrition, desires still to make the offender suffer, or exacts from him acknowledgements and submissions beyond what are reasonable, can only be actuated by a vindictive spirit, and becomes himself chargeable with wrong. Some, indeed, there are who *say* that they forgive, and yet retain a lurking enmity, which they still find means of indirectly gratifying, by continually reminding the offender of his fault, and seeking every occasion to revive his painful feelings of remorse or shame. Such conduct is obviously only another mode of taking revenge, and only the more detestable and cruel for being disguised under the appearance of forgiveness. The man of truly forgiving spirit not only abstains from further punishment on observing the signs of sincere repentance, but casts off all animosity. He seeks to bury the wrongs repented of, as much as possible, in utter oblivion, and carefully avoids

the slightest hint or allusion which may awaken the memory of them in the mind of the contrite offender.

But the exercise of a forgiving spirit is not by any means confined to those cases where repentance is manifested and the power of punishment is possessed. The greater part by far of the injuries we suffer are such as admit of no redress, and leave no hope of repentance, or even acknowledgement of error, in those who inflict them. The resentment in this case excited can only in general operate as a source of disquiet to the heart in which it dwells, disposing it to brood continually upon the torturing thought of its wrongs, to view them in a light of the greatest possible aggravation, to thirst for opportunities of vengeance, or to imprecate evil from any quarter upon the head of the offender. The spirit of forgiveness subdues these malignant and disquieting emotions. It prevents the mind from ruminating upon injuries sustained, and disposes it to soften them by every reasonable excuse. It suggests the possibility of good intentions, though appearances seem to indicate the contrary; of some mistake existing in the mind of the offender, or

of some previous provocation unwarily given on our part, which may justify in his own eyes his injurious conduct. If this supposition cannot be admitted, it allows due weight at least to every other extenuating plea which candour may suggest, and at the worst, regards the offender with pity rather than resentment, as the slave of evil passions, through which he is himself by far the greatest sufferer. Nay more; if opportunities present themselves of rendering a service to the offender, the man of forgiving spirit will not withhold the good which it is in his power to do, but will rather rejoice to make this generous requital for the wrongs he has sustained. Not satisfied with being not overcome of evil, he will overcome evil, if he can, with good; disposed at all times to return benevolent wishes and kind offices for malicious treatment; to judge charitably of those who judge uncharitably of him; to bless those who curse him; to do good to those who hate him; and to pray for those who despitefully use and persecute him.

Such being the precise nature and limitations of the duty of forgiveness, let us proceed to consider the arguments which may be urged to enforce and recommend it.

The conduct which has been pointed out will operate, in the first place, as the best security from injury. Revenge, if it have any end in view beyond the infliction of suffering, most commonly defeats that end, by the very means which it takes for its accomplishment. It seeks to excite repentance, and to deter from further injury; but it serves only to confirm the enmity of its objects, and to draw on fresh provocations. For they who *commit* injustice, seldom do it without some plausible pretext, which conceals from them the real nature of their crime: while they, on the other hand, who *suffer* injustice, are too apt, through pride or inordinate self-partiality, to view it in an aggravated light, and to be desirous of inflicting a severer punishment than the injury deserves. Hence it generally happens, that what was intended only as a measure of equal retaliation, is received as an unmerited wrong, and justifies the offender to his own conscience in retaliating in his turn. It may well, therefore, be imagined what endless feuds and implacable animosities must constantly imbitter the life of him who indulges a vindictive temper. But while retaliation serves only as a plea to justify past and incite to fresh injuries, the mild spirit of forgiveness

softens rage, disarms animosity, inspires repentance in the heart which meditated mischief, and not unfrequently converts an inveterate foe into a warm and faithful friend. For hard, indeed, must that heart be, on which a generous forgetfulness of injuries will make no good impression: and dark indeed must be the ingratitude, which can heap additional wrong on him who has already requited wrongs with benefits.

But though revenge evidently tends only to inflame *present* animosity, may it not yet be useful in deterring from *future* injury, by means of the fear which it inspires? And will not they who are disposed to mischief, be naturally more backward to offer an injury to one who has shown a promptness to resent, than to him who is known to be of a contrary character? I grant that the want of resentment, if it be seen to arise from motives of fear, or be carried to an injudicious extreme, will have the effect of inviting the attacks of the unprincipled. But be it remembered, that a tame acquiescence in every unjust aggression is by no means implied in the virtue of forgiveness. And where the disposition to forgive, and the readiness to return good for evil, is known to be accompa-

nied, as it ever should, by that manly spirit which will not suffer wanton wrong to be offered with impunity, there is enough to operate upon the fears of those, who only by fear are to be restrained from injury.

This conduct will, further, serve most effectually to remedy the injuries which it cannot prevent, by depriving them of their power to interrupt our peace. The man of vindictive spirit assists in a manner the purpose of his enemies, by suffering his mind to be disquieted by their injurious treatment. The passion he indulges, aggravates in a tenfold degree the evil which he suffers; for there is no passion that is a source of greater torment. Under its influence the mind loses its relish for all the innocent enjoyments of life, and becomes agitated, restless, and gloomy. Its victim, while engaged in pursuit of his object, is a stranger to that enjoyment which is found in other active pursuits; and when his object is attained, his satisfaction, if he experience any, is but of momentary duration, and is soon succeeded by the pangs of an accusing conscience. He, on the contrary, who is actuated by the spirit of forgiveness, deprives his enemies, if enemies he

have, of all power to interrupt his tranquillity. By never ruminating upon the wrongs he suffers, by never brooding upon thoughts of vengeance, he escapes those inward torments which the vindictive spirit by these means inflicts upon itself. While the consciousness of his own generosity imparts a positive satisfaction which far outweighs the sense of wrong, and with which no gratification furnished by revenge is at all worthy to be compared.

If the exercise of a forgiving disposition be thus advantageous to the individual, its beneficial influence upon society will be readily admitted. Without some degree, indeed, of regard to this duty, human society could hardly subsist. For did every one refuse to overlook whatever injuries he might receive, and assume the right of inflicting punishment according to his own discretion, it may easily be imagined what a dreadful scene of confusion, discord, and misery the world would soon present. The picture, indeed, has been faintly realized, in those bloody and interminable feuds, which, in times of barbarism, when revenge was esteemed a virtue, divided tribes and families, and were transmitted from one generation to another as

sacred inheritances; in those private wars which every where distracted the kingdoms of Europe during the ages of feudal anarchy; and in the horrid crimes and inveterate animosities by which periods of faction have been always marked. But it is not necessary to go so far to seek examples of the evil tendency of unrestrained vindictive passions. In the scenes and transactions presented to our immediate observation, there are not wanting instances of quarrels, which a little exercise of forgiveness might easily have appeased, but which, being fomented and prolonged by mutual acts of resentment, have divided families, estranged neighbours, and imbittered all the joys of social intercourse.

But, in the last place, the virtue of forgiveness is peculiarly recommended by its own intrinsic dignity. It evinces, in its higher degrees, a magnanimity which entitles it, beyond almost every other virtue, to the warm admiration of mankind. Benevolence is in all cases regarded with approbation; but when it overcomes the sense of injuries, it approaches to something of a divine character. To seek the welfare of those to whom we are bound by ties of friendship and affection, is easy, and what the worst

of men are capable of. To do good to those who have no other claim upon us than their common nature and their pressing wants, is an instance of no very high or very uncommon benevolence. But unfeignedly to feel good wishes towards an unjust adversary; to oppose on proper occasions malicious treatment with offices of kindness; argues that perfect self-command, and that entire superiority to every selfish feeling, which constitute the highest order of moral excellence.

2. Besides the injuries which are designedly inflicted on us, we are exposed, in our intercourse with men, to various grievances and vexations, which are not less trying to the temper, though they proceed not from any malicious motive. Such are the grievances which arise from the unreasonable prejudices, weaknesses, or peculiarities of our associates; from the selfish or perverse conduct of those with whom we deal; from the neglect of duty in those who are subject to our authority; from the ingratitude of those whom we have benefited, or the folly and misconduct of those in whose welfare we are deeply interested. Conduct of this description, though it may not excite that deep

and lasting resentment which commonly arises from wilful injuries, excites a passion which is nearly allied to it, and which is sometimes not less violent for the time it lasts—the passion of *Anger*. It has been debated whether this passion ought to be entirely suppressed, or only subjected to certain restraints. Our determination of this question will altogether depend upon the meaning which we attach to the term Anger. There is a calm and dignified expression of displeasure, devoid of all the characters of a passion, which is not only allowable, but highly proper, in certain cases of misconduct on the part of others, because it is the just corrective which that misconduct requires. And if we apply to this the name of Anger, there can be no hesitation in deciding in its favour. But the term Anger, according to its more common acceptation, implies something more than this calm displeasure; it implies a degree of passion bordering upon resentment, a state of emotion which is not consistent with perfect self-possession, but which, while it lasts, dislodges reason from her throne, and inspires exaggerated sentiments of the evil which excites it. Anger in this sense cannot certainly be regarded with approbation, and its

culpability may be shown by considerations drawn both from the nature of its exciting cause, and from its pernicious effects.

In vice, if its true nature be considered, there will be found nothing that should reasonably excite such emotions. It is not, in any case, the perverse and unaccountable preference of evil for its own sake; but the necessary result of certain mistaken views, which views themselves might always be accounted for, did we know, in their full extent, the various circumstances and impressions which have combined to form the character of the agent. Viewing in this philosophical light the conduct of the vicious, and foreseeing the misery which must one day result to them, if it does not now result, from their deluding passions; it will seem unreasonable to regard them with any other feeling than that of *compassion:* and this feeling will dictate that mode of treating them, which is wisest and most conducive to their good. Persons who are subject to the emotions of anger, are apt to flatter themselves that these emotions consist in an honest indignation against vice, and arise solely from the acuteness of their moral sensibility. But whenever any

thing of passionate resentment enters into our feelings towards offenders, it may always be justly suspected, that those feelings arise from some interested source; and that it is our wounded pride or mortified vanity, our offended prejudices, our thwarted wishes, or our excited fears, which secretly operate within us beneath that fair disguise. In the breast of the observer who is entirely disinterested, vice may excite a strong disapprobation, or a generous indignation; but it is only some personal detriment, felt or apprehended from it, which can inflame our displeasure into anger, and add to our reproof the bitterness of invective.—A temper prone to anger is plainly inconsistent both with all just views of human nature, and with a right knowledge of ourselves. For in a world like this in which we live, among beings so frail and fallible as men, how can we expect to meet with uniformly proper conduct in those with whom we associate? And since there is no individual who partakes not of the common frailty, with what pretence can an erring mortal, who needs so much indulgence himself, refuse the same indulgence to the errors of his fellow mortals?

Arguments against this passion may also be deduced from its pernicious effects. It is injurious to the person in whose breast it dwells, inasmuch as it deprives him of his self-command, disquiets his breast with painful emotions, and often hurries him on to deeds of rashness or severity, which are afterwards reflected on with the bitterest regret. Still more when it becomes habitual, and is excited by every smallest instance of negligence or error; for what more incessant source of torment than a *peevish* temper? With respect to its object also this passion is injurious, since it fails to correct the misconduct which provokes it. Instead of producing contrition and amendment, it generally creates a sense of injury and a feeling of resentment, which rouse a spirit of opposition, and provoke to a wilful repetition of the offence. How often has the extreme severity of a parent's treatment of the venial follies of his children alienated their affections from him, provoked them to wilful disobedience of his authority, and thus ultimately induced a disregard of every other salutary restraint! To those, lastly, who are only the witnesses of its effects, this tendency to undue anger is an evil. For wherever angry passions are expressed, a

gloom is spread over the social circle; the enlivening flow of good-humoured converse is interrupted, and uneasiness is felt in every breast. The presence alone of one who is subject to these emotions, even though they be not actually expressed, is sufficient to impose a painful constraint, from the fear lest some unwary action should be construed as an offence, or lest the careless expression of an innocent cheerfulness should be frowned at with displeasure. Unhappy is the lot of all those who are placed beneath his authority, for they must obey him with fear and trembling. But doubly unhappy is the fate of those who form the family circle where he rules, for to them that place in which the best affections of the heart should always centre, will be the hated scene of coldness, of restraint, and fear.

The virtue opposed to the error which we have been considering, is *Forbearance* or *Good Temper*. This virtue must not be understood to imply the least degree of insensibility to guilt; nor is it at all inconsistent with the expression of displeasure, or the infliction of punishment, in cases which justly require such treatment. It consists simply in viewing the misconduct of

our fellow men in its true light, with the dispassioned mind of an impartial spectator, and not with those impatient and resentful feelings which can arise only from personal and selfish considerations. With respect to those various petty grievances and vexations, which are perpetually occurring in the ordinary intercourse and business of life, these it is the glory of a good temper to bear with patience, and if not always to pass them over in silence, yet rarely to notice them at all, and never with harshness to upbraid them. For if every trifling instance of misconduct in those about us excite our indignation, we shall never either enjoy tranquillity ourselves, or suffer others to enjoy it. Peace will be a stranger to our dwelling. The voice of rebuke will be incessantly heard, and because incessantly heard, it will necessarily lose its effect. The very attempt to please our captious temper, having so often failed, will at length be given up in despair. And our authority having thus been expended on trifles, will be found wanting in cases of real emergence, when its restraining influence is needed most. With respect to those more serious instances of misconduct, which cannot thus be borne in silence, or rebuked with a smile, the

virtue of which I speak, consists in regarding them with that calm disapprobation, and treating them with that mild, yet steady discipline, which is the most effectual means of producing repentance and reformation in the offender. For the only proper feeling with which vice should be regarded, we have shown to be compassion, and this compassion, far from inclining us to treat the faults of others with that indulgence which will tend to encourage and confirm them, will naturally prompt us to use all means within our power for their correction; and will dictate, at the same time, precisely that behaviour, which will be most likely to secure the accomplishment of this object. Unwelcome to every one is the mention of his faults, and delicate, we all know, is the task of him who desires to reprove without offending. But peculiarly offensive is the voice of reproof, when accompanied with expressions of anger or contempt; for then it is regarded, and not without reason, as the mere ebullition of personal resentment, and can only prompt to an obstinate justification, if not to a wilful repetition of the offence. Whereas the reproof which is administered in the spirit of compassion, is such as cannot but be felt to proceed from a wish to

benefit, and will always, therefore, be received with that attention and gratitude, which are the surest pledge that it will prove effectual.

From this view of the principal characteristics of the virtue of forbearance, its high value and importance will plainly appear. But we shall be yet more sensible of its great utility, if we consider how constantly it is required in the conduct of life, and how material is its influence on human happiness. For the scene of its exercise is the daily, ever-present scene of business and domestic intercourse. It is here, in our own homes, and in the bosom of our own families, that our actions are without restraint, that our natural dispositions have their full play, and that our characters appear in their native, undissembled colours. Here, therefore, the several infirmities and perversities of disposition by which we are apt to annoy one another, will be most plainly manifested, and here, consequently, patience and good temper to endure them in a proper manner, will be most required. If, then, it be considered how large a portion of our time is necessarily spent in these domestic scenes, and how much the enjoyment of life depends on maintaining har-

mony with those who are our daily and hourly associates, we shall be sensible that we can hardly estimate too highly the importance of a forbearing temper. Other virtues may be more splendid; but there is none more useful than this, because there is none of which the exercise is more frequently called for. Other virtues may be more extensively beneficial in their effects; but there is none which merits more unhesitating and unqualified praise, because there is none which exhibits a more indisputable proof of self-denial. The hero, the patriot, the public benefactor, the champion who dares, or the martyr who suffers, in the view of thousands, may be secretly actuated by the love of glory. But what, except the purest principles of goodness, can be supposed to actuate the patient attendant upon the couch of peevish sickness or fretful decrepitude, whose constant solicitude to sooth the pains, prevent the wishes, and amuse the mind of the hapless sufferer, not all his thankless complaints and unkind language can, for one moment, divert or weary?

3. The third class of evils arising from the agency of others consists of those *dissensions*,

which so oft result from an interference of claims or pretensions, where no injury or grievance is either intended or thought to be inflicted, but where each of the contending parties thinks himself in the right. That such dissensions may sometimes arise even among men of the best principles and intentions, is sufficiently obvious. For in many cases of disputed right, there is real room for doubt, so that persons unswayed by any partiality might differently decide concerning them. And in cases of a less disputable nature, as they appear to impartial observers, an interested party, from the natural bias of his mind, may feel perfectly convinced of the fairness of claims, which in reality are wrongful. The virtues called for in such circumstances are these: openness and sincerity in explaining the subject of disagreement; and a generous willingness to sacrifice, to a certain extent, our own interest or inclination, for the sake of peace.

1. A manly openness and frankness in meeting the subject of threatened dissension will generally prove the means of preventing it. A *quarrel* is frequently termed a *misunderstanding*, and how often is it, literally and

truly, nothing more than this! What more common than the case of disagreement prevailing between men of the best intentions, from their mere misconception of each other's views or motives! An innocent, but unguarded, action of one is first mistaken by the other for an affront, and as such resented. This resentment, being felt to be unjust, is naturally viewed in the light of an unprovoked attack, and excites, of course, corresponding animosity; and the quarrel is fomented by mutual acts and words of hostility, which are the more violent and indignant, because each feels confident that all the injustice is on the side of his adversary. Thus originates, and thus is protracted, a feud which nothing was wanting to obviate, but a few words of explanation in the first instance. And how deeply is it to be lamented, that, for want of that remedy which a little openness and candour would so cheaply have afforded, so much disquieting enmity should thus needlessly prevail between persons who are unconscious of a wish to injure.—Some, moreover, are of that close and sullen temper, that they take offence at we know not what, and burying their displeasure in their own breast, brood long in silence over the imagined injury. Meanwhile, their

unwonted coldness, their dark insinuations, their unkind words, or pettish behaviour, sufficiently show that they are offended, though perhaps the object of their displeasure is altogether unconscious of his fault, and lost in amazement at their altered manner. How much more manly and estimable is the conduct of him, who at once either declares his displeasure, or entirely suppresses it; whose open bosom knows no harboured enmity, and whose frank and candid temper will never suffer the wound of dissension to rankle in secret beyond the hope of remedy, for want of fortitude to probe it.

2. Another quality of great use in cases of dissension, is a generous willingness to sacrifice, to a certain extent, our own interest or inclination, for the sake of peace. When a contest of claims or purposes arises among those who are conscious of no wrongful wish, but who differ because they cannot view the subject of dispute in the same light, if each, in such case, persists with unbending obstinacy in maintaining his presumed rights, and determines to make no relinquishment or sacrifice whatsoever for the sake of peace; what end will there ever be of contention?—what hope or possibility of

accommodation? However confident we may feel in the justice of our cause, it is but fair to consider that those who oppose us, may feel equally confident that right is on their side, and that *possibly* their claims or pretensions may not be wholly destitute of reason. But supposing we were infallibly certain of the rectitude of our cause, yet in many instances, *where the matter in dispute is not of much importance*, it is surely better to relinquish our pretensions, than, by obstinately persisting in them, to involve ourselves in discord. This generous conduct will often have the effect of allaying opposition, which a contrary treatment would serve only to confirm. For when once the passions are provoked to the contest, as they soon will be where a too unbending spirit is evinced, the judgment is so completely blinded by their influence, as to be wholly incapable of fair discussion. But, by seasonable compliance, we touch the heart of our misguided adversary; we lead him to review more calmly and impartially the subject of dispute, and bring him to that frame of mind, which will best dispose him to perceive and admit his error.

By no means, however, let this be understood

as recommending a slavish, indiscriminate compliance in all cases of dissension. There are, of course, limits to this accommodating temper, beyond which it becomes not merely destitute of merit, but in a high degree pernicious and culpable. The above observations, be it carefully noticed, are expressly restricted to those cases in which the matter in dispute is of small importance. There are cases of unjust encroachment upon our rights, in which the smallest compliance would expose us to material injury, without the hope that any compliance would soften our adversary to better sentiments. There are dissensions, in which to yield one iota of our claims or purposes, would be to compromise our integrity, to betray the sacred cause of truth or virtue, to sacrifice the welfare of those who are dependant on us, or to relinquish schemes important to the general welfare. To forego in such cases our purposes or claims, would be, not laudable generosity, but cowardly and guilty weakness. Nor would it even serve effectually to secure us the enjoyment of peace; since such compliances would only tempt a renewal of the same unjust encroachments. And peace itself, if it could be thus secured, would be far too dearly purchased at such a price.

4. It only now remains to point out the due regulation of those passions which arise from imagined or apprehended injuries, or from displeasing associations. But as the passion of Envy, has already received sufficient consideration,* our attention will be confined in this place to the feelings of Suspicion, Jealousy, and Antipathy.

Suspicion is that state of mind which is produced by doubtful appearances of injury committed or intended by others. Of course it is a feeling in many instances not to be avoided, and when fully warranted by the circumstances of the case, is not only justifiable, but highly useful as a motive to that precaution which is often necessary in our dealings with men. Then only is it to be accounted culpable, when entertained on insufficient grounds, or when it constitutes the prevailing and habitual temper of the mind: and in this case it is chargeable both with folly as respects the individual subject to it, and with injustice towards others. It is almost needless to remark how utterly impossible it is, that peace of mind should dwell with an habitually suspicious temper; and how truly

* See Vol I. p. 371.

pitiable must be the condition of him who fancies he can confide in no one, and is harassed with perpetual fears of treachery, duplicity, or mischievous intentions in all with whom he has transactions or intercourse. But still more is this temper hurtful and censurable on account of the frequent injustice to which it leads. Appearances, we well know, may often be unfavourable, where in reality there is the most entire innocence; and these appearances the suspicious seize upon as unquestionable evidences of guilt, without taking time for further inquiry, or allowing due weight to counterbalancing circumstances or contrary possibilities. Nay, circumstances in themselves the most innocent or trivial are often, in their distempered view, perverted into signs of guilt. Thus prone to put unfavourable constructions upon the conduct of all around them, and acting upon these hasty presumptions, they not only give deep and just offence to the objects of their suspicions, but incur universal dislike, and not unfrequently alienate the affections even of their best friends. Independently, however, of its pernicious effects, the impure source from which this temper generally springs, constitutes alone a sufficient ground

of condemnation. Sometimes, indeed, it is the result merely of a timid and anxious disposition, which is constantly filled with apprehensions of danger from every possible quarter. But generally it has an origin even less respectable than this, and argues the existence of an evil conscience. For who so apt to entertain suspicions of sinister designs in others, as they who are themselves designing? Who so prone to feel mistrust of others, as they who are conscious that they deserve to be themselves mistrusted?

Jealousy, in the most extensive sense of that term, is that mingled feeling of suspicion, fear, and resentment, which is excited by any encroachment attempted, or supposed to be attempted, upon some valued possession which we desire to engross. Thus princes are jealous of their authority, whenever it is resisted or called in question. Subjects are jealous of their rights, whenever power attempts to infringe them. Individuals are jealous of their honour, when any injurious imputation is cast upon them. But jealousy, in its more restricted and peculiar acceptation, is that painful and malignant feeling which arises from rivalry in our attach-

ments, more especially in the attachments between the sexes, and consists in distrust with respect to the object whose affections we wish to engross, and hatred towards the person by whom we imagine ourselves to be supplanted. Respecting the moral restraints of this passion, little or nothing can here be said, which has not been anticipated in the precepts already prescribed for the regulation of those several desires and affections, from which it may spring. That there may be a proper jealousy, that is, an allowable care to secure ourselves from detriment in any point of great importance to our happiness, the instances above mentioned sufficiently show. The term jealousy, however, most commonly implies an undue degree of this interested care, and consequently an undue degree of the desire or affection from which it springs. Being in this case a source of great disquiet, and an incitement to injustice, the passion is evidently deserving of censure; but can only be corrected by duly restraining the inordinate desires that give it birth. With respect to jealousy in that more restricted and peculiar sense in which the term is frequently applied, it is altogether needless to treat of it here, since it has been so often the theme of the poet and

dramatist, whose lively representations of its wild extravagancies and torturing agitations afford on the subject a far more impressive lesson than the moralist's abstract reasoning.

Malignant feelings are sometimes entertained without any obvious cause. Where no injury has been inflicted; where no right or interest of our's has been either knowingly or unknowingly invaded, we yet sometimes feel towards particular individuals an involuntary dislike, for which we cannot ourselves assign any just reason. But though it is often difficult to trace these antipathies to their source, yet some cause they must always have, and it may generally, on a more careful scrutiny of our hearts, be discovered. Sometimes antipathy arises from contempt, which not only destroys all feeling of kindness towards the despised object, but renders his very presence hateful, and disposes us to seize every occasion of humbling and mortifying him by the expression of our mean opinion. More frequently antipathy owes its origin to fear. When, for instance, we observe in another qualities which seem capable of giving us annoyance, though no annoyance may have been actually suffered, yet the bare

apprehension of it is generally sufficient to render their possessor an object of dislike. It is for this reason that persons addicted to the indulgence of satirical wit have always so many enemies; for they incur the hatred not only of those who have actually felt the stings of their sarcasm, but of that far greater number also, who have only witnessed the exercise of their powers, and to whom the thought will unavoidably occur, that these powers may next be exercised on themselves. Sometimes, moreover, the mere influence of association is the cause of unfounded hatred. Having conceived a deep-rooted animosity against one who has actually injured or offended us, we can hardly avoid entertaining somewhat of the same feeling towards those, who either in character, manners, or personal appearance, resemble him and remind us of him. Not unfrequently dislike arises from opposition of sentiment, from the prejudices of party, or from contrariety of tastes, habits, and inclinations. Arrogant pretensions and airs of conceit or haughtiness, as they wound the secret pride of all observers, seldom fail to inspire the bitterest enmity. And, in many instances, the hatred for which we cannot, or do not trouble ourselves to account, may

be found, on a stricter scrutiny, to arise from concealed envy, which is a feeling of so base and odious a nature, that none are willing to acknowledge it even to their own consciences. From whatsoever source our antipathies spring, the dictates of duty respecting them are clear and cogent, requiring us with all assiduity to restrain and suppress them, since they are alike injurious to ourselves and others. They fill with disquiet the breast in which they dwell, and are obviously hostile to the peace of society. Seldom, if ever, do they arise from any honourable or justifiable cause; but argue more frequently something wrong in our own dispositions, which calls for our endeavours to find out and rectify.

CHAP. IX.

OF RELIGION AND THE REGULATION OF THE RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

In the preceding detail of the duties of human life, no arguments, generally speaking, have been employed to enforce them, but such as refer to the natural consequences of our conduct in this world, and little allusion of any kind has been made to views of a religious nature. The reason of which is, that I consider *the moral constitution of man, and the influence of his present circumstances upon his character*, as affording by far the best evidence of the existence of a God, and the best insight into his designs respecting us. And till we have considered what reason teaches us on these subjects, we are unprepared for entering upon the discussion of those virtues, or those arguments in favour of virtue, which are founded on religious views.

The ideas and feelings of religion are evidently congenial to the human mind; for

scarcely in any age or country has man been found so sunk in ignorance and stupidity as to be altogether regardless of supernatural agency, or destitute of the expectation of future existence.* The grand operations of nature, so far beyond his feeble power to control, particularly its more extraordinary and striking phænomena, irresistibly impress the mind of the most uncultivated savage with some notions of an invisible, superior power. And though, as human knowledge enlarges, many effects which were at first ascribed to the immediate agency of this invisible power, are found to arise from natural causes, yet still there remain effects in countless number, which cannot thus be accounted for; and the agency of a Deity appears only the more plainly manifested by that admirable order and contrivance, which this deeper insight into nature serves more clearly to display.

The moral sentiments of men, moreover, those sentiments which, though oft misguided

* The rude tribes of America, according to Dr. Robertson, universally entertained the expectation of future existence, though there were some who had no notion of a Deity. See Robertson's History of America. Book iv. (Works, Vol. IX. p. 139—201.)

and always imperfect, are never entirely wanting in the human mind, lead them, by a very natural and easy process of thought, to the notion both of a superintending Providence, and a future state of retribution. Led, as we have seen, by the desire of happiness, to the formation of some rule of moral duty, they are equally prompted by the same principle to venerate that rule as something sacred, and to guard and enforce it by every possible sanction. For this purpose it is that laws have been established, and rulers vested with authority. But laws and rulers are soon found to be but very imperfectly available. A thousand crimes may be committed, which they cannot possibly restrain or punish; and not unfrequently the power which should protect, becomes the source of the very worst injustice. Imagination, therefore, fondly pictures to the minds of men some higher power who will extend to the virtuous a more effectual protection, and avenge those crimes which have escaped the arm of human justice.—Thus, by their moral sentiments, not less than by their observation of the frame of nature, mankind are naturally led to the notion of a Deity. But as that more equal distribution of justice does not appear to be accomplished

in this world, the same principles have not less naturally prompted the expectation of a future state, where all the inequalities of the present state will be rectified, where virtue will meet with its appropriate reward, and vice with its deserved punishment. Some other natural presumptions of the human mind have, at the same time, concurred with and confirmed this expectation. We cannot conceive a state of complete annihilation. Though our judgment tells us that the dead can neither think nor feel, we unwarily invest them, in our imaginations, with all their former faculties. We picture to ourselves a spirit or shade, which constituted, while united to the body, its animating principle, but which survives the dissolution of its fleshly tenement, and still, in its separate state, remains susceptible of all its former feelings and perceptions. For the reception of these departed souls of men, fancy has devised, and most religious systems have sanctioned the belief of, some invisible world, some region beneath or beyond the earth, where the justice of heaven will be awarded, where the souls of the just will be admitted to joys unspeakable, while torments, such as no tongue can tell, will be inflicted upon the impious, either without hope

of any cessation, or till, purified from every stain of guilt, they become fitted for returning under new forms to the scenes of their former existence.

Such are the presumptions and reasonings which naturally present themselves to the human mind, and which have accordingly constituted, under various modifications, the basis of all the systems of religion, which have, in different ages and countries, obtained among mankind. The affections and feelings of religion may therefore be considered as not less a part of the human constitution, than any of those dispositions which have been already treated of; nor do they less require the guidance and control of reason; for on no subject has human nature exhibited greater extravagancies of opinion, or more fatal errors of conduct, than on that of religion. As the corruption of the best things renders them the worst, so the corruption of religion has proved one of the most abundant sources of human guilt and misery. To enter into any thing like a full enumeration of all the various errors into which the religious affections, not properly guided by enlightened reason, have led man-

kind; to detail the various systems of false religion which have obtained reception in the world, and all the train of superstitious practices or enthusiastic ravings, which have disgraced the human intellect; would be a task far too extensive for our present design. Suffice it to describe two general classes of religious error, under which all particular instances of such error may be reduced,—Superstition, and Enthusiasm.

Superstition arises from the predominance of *fear* in our notions of superior or invisible agency. It leads men to multiply the objects of their adoration, from the apprehension of offending any superior power by neglecting to pay him homage. Or if their religious creed admits not a plurality of deities, it leads them to regard the Deity with slavish dread, and to seek his favour by means of rigid mortifications, severe penances, pompous sacrifices, or a minute observance of a variety of trifling ceremonies. It fills the minds of men with various fears of unknown evils arising from unknown agents; and by leading them to apprehend some secret influence upon their destiny in a thousand casual appearances or trifling inci-

dents, has produced that regard to omens, prognostics, and oracles, which has afforded so many facilities for priestcraft to practise its arts, and maintain its authority over the deluded multitude.

Enthusiasm, on the contrary, is that state of religious feeling which arises from a warm imagination and sanguine temper, and consists in entertaining a *presumptuous confidence* in the divine favour. It inspires men with the belief that they are the peculiar favourites of God, that they are admitted to familiar intercourse with him, and honoured with peculiar communications of his spirit. The heated imagination of enthusiasts transports them into an ideal world of their own, where visionary objects are contemplated as the most assured realities, and engage their passions with a degree of ardour which renders all sublunary things contemptible in their eyes. Hence those extravagant emotions, those wild projects, and that furious zeal, which distinguish the religion of enthusiasts, and which so far exceed the bounds of reason, that they appear to the calm observer the dictates of phrensy. And hence it is that the opinions which they happen to

have formed, or the thoughts which are casually suggested to their minds, are often regarded, with the most undoubting confidence, as the dictates of the divine spirit, and actions sometimes of the most atrocious nature appear, to their deluded fancy, sanctioned by the express command of Heaven.

The evil of both these dispositions consists in this, that they lead men to undervalue the moral virtues, and to rely for happiness on means altogether distinct from rectitude of heart and conduct. The superstitious not unfrequently consider the neglect of some idle ceremony as far more dangerous and criminal than any moral offence; and while they are scrupulously observant of all the external forms and rites of religion, can violate all its most essential duties without the least compunction. The enthusiast, already assured of the divine favour, and regarding his occasional raptures of mistaken devotion as a certain evidence of superior holiness, is equally prone to despise the calm lessons of rational morality, the strictest observance of which, if unaccompanied by those visionary feelings which are the ground of his own self-complacence, he regards as

altogether worthless in the sight of Heaven, if not partaking of the nature of sin.

Before we attempt to describe the proper state of the religious feelings, it is necessary that we enter into an inquiry respecting the grounds on which they rest; for without a well-established conviction of the existence of God, and just notions of his character, government, and designs, the feelings of true and rational piety cannot subsist. We therefore propose to consider what evidence reason affords of the existence of God, and the reality of a future state, and what particular views it suggests on these momentous subjects.

SECTION I.

EVIDENCES AND DOCTRINES OF NATURAL RELIGION.

As the whole of our reasoning in proof of the being of God rests on the necessity of supposing an intelligent cause to account for what we actually observe, our attention is called, at the outset of our inquiry, to an objection which strikes at the very root of this argument. It has been affirmed, or insinuated, that we are not warranted in reasoning thus, because in fact

we know nothing of the nature of causation; that all we see and all we know in any instance where we say that one thing is the cause of another, is that certain phænomena have constantly been observed to happen in succession; that this constant succession, however, does not imply a necessary connexion, and that, for aught we know, the same events might have taken place altogether independently of one another.—" Upon the whole," says Mr. Hume, " there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connexion, which is conceivable by us. All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another, but we can never observe any tie between them. They seem *conjoined*, but never *connected*. And as we can have no idea of any thing, which never appeared to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion *seems* to be, that we have no idea of connexion or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasonings or common life."* Such being, according to this doctrine, the whole amount, in all cases, of our knowledge of the connexion between cause and

* Enquiry concerning Human Understanding. Section vii.

effect, the unavoidable consequence would be, that we are not warranted in drawing any inferences from the one to the other, except such as we are led to by actual experience. We may justly infer that a house or a ship, which we find complete, must have been contrived by human ingenuity, and constructed by human hands, because we have seen the actual process of such fabrications, and have observed the actual agency of man in a thousand similar instances. Whereas the universe is an *unique* phænomenon; we have never witnessed the origin of worlds; and wanting therefore the experience of that *constant conjunction* which is the whole amount of our knowledge of cause and effect, and the sole ground of our inferences from the one to the other, we are left entirely without analogy to guide us, and without any solid ground on which to rest the belief of an unseen creator. But lest I should misrepresent the objection, I will give it in the words of its author. "I much doubt," says Hume, "whether it be possible for a cause to be known only by its effect, or to be of so singular and particular a nature, as to have no parallel and no similarity with any other cause or object that has ever fallen under our observation. It is only

when two *species* of objects are found to be constantly conjoined, that we can infer the one from the other: and were an effect presented which was entirely singular, and could not be comprehended under any known *species*, I do not see that we could form any conjecture or inference at all concerning its cause. If experience and observation and analogy be indeed the only guides which we can reasonably follow in inferences of this nature, both the effect and cause must bear a similarity and resemblance to other effects and causes which we know, and which we have found in many instances to be conjoined with each other."* Again in another place the same writer observes, "When two *species* of objects have always been observed to be conjoined together, I can *infer*, by custom, the existence of one wherever I *see* the existence of the other: and this I call an argument from experience. But how this argument can have place where the objects, as in the present case, are single, individual, without parallel, or specific resemblance, may be difficult to explain. And will any man tell me with a serious countenance, that an orderly universe must arise from some thought and act, like the human;

* Enquiry concerning Human Understanding. Section. xi.

because we have experience of it? To ascertain this reasoning, it were requisite that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient, surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance."*

Now with respect to that part of this objection which consists in denying our knowledge of any necessary connexion between cause and effect, and in representing our idea of this connexion as being nothing more, in any instance, than the idea of the constant conjunction of certain events; I observe that this doctrine, though true in part, is not by any means true to the extent here stated; and the doctrine has been too incautiously admitted, without any limitation, by writers who would be the last to admit the dangerous consequences to which it would lead.† In one instance at least we do know something more than this mere constancy of conjunction between cause and effect. Between *mind* and *its productions* we perceive a

* Dialogues concerning Natural Religion. Part ii.

† See Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, ch. i. sec. ii. and Brown's Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind, Lecture vii.—See also Note L.

necessary connexion, and it is hence that we derive the true idea of causation. It is true that, in accounting for the phænomena of nature, we say that one event or object is the cause of another, where, if we carefully scrutinize our ideas, we find that all we know is, that the former uniformly precedes the latter. The tides, we say, are caused by the moon's attraction acting upon the waters of the ocean; but of the nature and mode of this attraction we are altogether ignorant; all we know is, that the passage of the moon over the meridian is followed by the rise of the waters. It is heat, we say, which expands water into vapour, and the abstraction of heat, which condenses that vapour, and converts it again into water; but in this instance likewise we know nothing whatsoever of the manner in which the effect is produced; we know only that such changes invariably follow the addition or abstraction of a certain quantity of heat. The doctrinė holds true also, to a certain extent, with respect to the agency of living beings. I will to raise my arm, and the motion immediately ensues: but so far am I from being in the strictest sense the cause of this motion, that I am utterly at a loss to understand in what way my volition

operates upon the various muscles concerned in producing it, and am altogether ignorant, it may be, of many of the complicated parts which are called into action in the process. The volition is formed, and the motion follows; and my remembrance that the same motion has always followed, and my belief that it will always continue to follow, the same volition, is all that I know of cause and effect in this instance. But though this observation may appear to extend to all effects produced by man or other animals, since it is only by means of our bodily organs that we can operate upon surrounding objects, yet if we take such effects as evince *contrivance* or *design*, and consider that contrivance *abstractedly*, it will surely be allowed, that between the mind of the agent, and *so much of the effect as consists in the contrivance by itself considered*, there is a necessary connexion, a real causation. The artist, for instance, who contrives and puts together an ingenious piece of mechanism, is not, it is admitted, the cause of the *whole* effect produced: he did not create the materials which he employs; nor is he, strictly speaking, the cause of those motions of his limbs or fingers by which he operates; for he knows not even how they are produced;

but so far as regards the *design* of the mechanism abstractedly considered, of *that* he is the cause in the strictest possible sense. Between *that*, and the idea which previously existed in his mind as the model of the work, there is surely something more than a mere arbitrary succession; there is a necessary and close connexion. The one is the very transcript of the other. The contrivance of the mechanism corresponds exactly with the ingenuity of the artist, and cannot even be conceived to have existed independently of it. There cannot, therefore, be a more legitimate inference, than that which leads us, from the observation of means skilfully adjusted to certain ends, to the belief of an intelligent mind as the cause of that adjustment.

But this inference, it is asserted, cannot be justly drawn, unless we have had some previous acquaintance with causes and effects similar to those which are the subject of our reasoning. "If experience and observation and analogy," says Hume, "be, indeed, the only guides which we can reasonably follow in inferences of this nature; both the effect and the cause must bear a similarity to other effects and causes which

we know, and which we have found, in many instances, to be conjoined with each other." Whatever marks of design, therefore, we may discover in the world, we have no right to infer that it is the production of an intelligent cause, unless "we had experience of the origin of worlds." This appears plausible, upon the supposition that we know nothing more of causation, in any instance, than the mere arbitrary conjunction or succession of events. But if it be true, as I have just endeavoured to show, that we perceive a necessary connexion, a real causation, between the adjustment of means to ends, and a mind or intelligence which devised that adjustment, the objection is altogether without weight. Contrivance, wherever it can be clearly perceived, must necessarily lead us to the belief of a contriver. No axiom appears to me more indisputable than this; and on this I take my stand with fullest confidence. The discovery of contrivance is itself the discovery of mind, and altogether excludes the idea of chance, or of any blindly-operating principle.—But even upon Mr. Hume's own principles, the inference may be legitimately drawn. The effect, and the cause to which it relates, do bear in some degree that resemblance, which

he requires, to other causes and other effects which we know. The design which is displayed in the works of nature is similar in kind, however it may be superior in degree, to the contrivances of human art. And our idea of the Deity is and can be nothing more than the idea of human intelligence and human virtue carried to the utmost imaginable perfection. Though it be true, therefore, that we have not had experience of the origin of worlds, sufficient analogy nevertheless remains to warrant the inference which we draw. The case, indeed, is necessarily, by its own nature, singular in some degree, and without any exact parallel; for how is it conceivable that we should have had the same kind of experience with respect to the origin of worlds, that we have with respect to the formation of houses and ships and other works of human art? To say that this is requisite before we can infer that the world is the production of a Deity, is to say that nothing short of direct experience ought to satisfy us of his existence; for if we have had experience of the origin of worlds, we must *actually have seen* their maker, and what need, then, of that weaker evidence which even the strictest analogy would afford? Analogy, we

admit, is often a very fallacious guide, and great caution is requisite in all reasoning founded upon it. But it is not solely upon that ground that we do reason in proving the existence of a Deity. We build our argument on the absolute necessity we are under, of assigning a cause for the effects which we observe. No truth, I repeat it, can be more unquestionable than this, that where we find a system of means regularly arranged for the attainment of an end, where we find a thousand admirable contrivances displayed in the adaptation of those means to their end; and more especially, where we find that end to be one of high importance and utility,—there *intelligence* must have been at work. Now such is exactly the case with the system of nature. The world in which we live is a world of order and contrivance. It exhibits a system of means disposed with wonderful regularity and skill for accomplishing an object of evident importance; namely, the support, preservation, and happiness of innumerable tribes of living creatures. To enter into any enlarged detail of the numberless contrivances of nature, as exhibited in the structure and mechanism of the world, and more particularly in the varied and complicated

frames of its inhabitants, would obviously require too great a space to be consistent with the design of the present treatise. Referring, therefore, for evidence of this kind, to works more expressly treating of the subject, and in particular to the well-known, incomparable work of Paley, I shall only briefly review the more prominent features of the world which we inhabit, and then proceed to that evidence, which is at once the most important in itself, and the most suitable to the present treatise, I mean the evidence afforded by the moral government of the world, and the moral constitution of man.

On examining the animal structure, we cannot fail to perceive that it is incapable of existing except in a situation which furnishes in due quantity certain indispensable requisites. We observe, for example, a series of organs adapted for the reception, mastication, deglutition, digestion, and absorption of *food;* and we are at once sensible that a creature thus constituted cannot possibly subsist without a supply, and a constant unfailing supply, of that which is suited for the exercise of these organs. Let us see, then, how the place assigned for

the habitation of this creature corresponds with these necessities of his structure. The earth, we observe, though formed internally of hard and unproductive materials, has its surface covered with a layer of soil, which is fitted for the support of vegetable life. From that soil, foul and unseemly as it is, a thousand forms arise of exquisite beauty and most delicate fabric, and its juices, imbibed and circulated by a wondrous, though hidden, process, create the verdure of the field, the strength of the majestic tree, the inimitable tint and fragrance of unnumbered flowers, and an infinite variety of nutritious fruits, which furnish to every species of animal an agreeable and appropriate food. Let us notice, more particularly, that admirable machinery, which is provided and constantly in operation, for furnishing another requisite alike essential to the maintenance both of animal and vegetable life;—"those wandering cisterns in the skies," which, after collecting their watery treasures from a thousand exhalations, are wafted by the winds over every region of the earth, and diffuse the reviving moisture, not in a torrent overwhelming and oppressing what it was designed to nourish, but in softly-falling showers, which the

tenderest herbs and the most delicately fashioned flowers receive without the slightest injury. If there be any case in nature in which we are justified in affirming that one thing was made for another, it is this. That the plough was made for tilling the ground, and the pump for drawing water, is not more manifest, than that this more magnificent apparatus of nature was provided for the sustenance of animal and vegetable life; and if those contrivances are justly to be considered as proofs of human intelligence, it cannot with any consistency be denied, that the soil of the earth, with its various productions, and the clouds, and rains, and dews of heaven, are equally convincing proofs of divine intelligence.—Be it observed, moreover, that as the need of food is constant, constant also is the supply. From age to age the earth has continued to pour forth with unerring regularity its abundant produce; and though unpropitious seasons, or other extraordinary causes, may diminish the supply, and create a temporary or local scarcity, yet nothing in the least approaching to a total or general failure has ever yet been experienced or apprehended. Since the memory of man the earth's productive energy has continued

unimpaired, and generation after generation has reaped its ever teeming fruits. And though it may be true that the powers of population are capable of outstripping those of vegetable production, the fact, when fully considered, will not be found to present so great a difficulty in the economy of Providence, as it appears to do on a first consideration. Notwithstanding the amazing *capabilities* of animal increase, respecting which there can be no dispute, it is admitted that the *actual* increase can never very far exceed the limits of subsistence; for no sooner has the smallest excess of population taken place, than it is checked by the difficulty, which is immediately felt, of obtaining subsistence, and the evil, long before it has risen to any alarming height, corrects itself. We see, in fact, its whole extent in that poverty which oppresses, and has always oppressed, a certain portion of mankind, but respecting which it is material to observe, that though it implies a difficulty of obtaining the means of subsistence, it very rarely indeed amounts to absolute destitution. It will be our object hereafter to consider the use of this and all other natural and moral evil, and I trust it will be made to appear that it answers a most im-

portant and benevolent purpose in the scheme of divine government. All that it is necessary to observe at present, is, that the evil arising from the law of population is entirely within our power to obviate, and actually is obviated more or less in all communities, by the exercise of that moral restraint, which all our natural appetites alike require.*

Another essential requisite of life is *air;* and the failure of its supply, for the period even of a few moments, would be fatal to our existence. Accordingly we find this wonderful and indispensable fluid surrounding us on every side, presenting itself every where unsought, pervading every region, and penetrating every recess where animal life in its minutest forms can enter. It is subject to various changes;—it is agitated by winds; it is altered in its temperature; it is sometimes dry, and sometimes charged with moisture; it is purer and more favourable to health in some places than in others;—but it is never totally withdrawn: no accident has ever yet produced a general vacuum upon the surface of the earth, or so mate-

* Note M.

rially altered the qualities of the air as to render it incapable of supporting life.—Science informs us that it is not a simple substance, but composed of two gases widely different in their properties, one of which by itself is destructive to life; and the same elements, combined in different proportions, form compounds equally unfit for respiration. The art of man can separate these ingredients, can combine them in other proportions, and exhibit under these new combinations their destructive power; but the fatal experiment has never yet been made by nature. The wondrous fluid, through all the changes to which it is in other respects subject, retains unaltered its nice combination, and has never yet been known to lose its life-sustaining properties.

But moreover, in addition to food and air, a certain degree of *temperature* is necessary to the support of animal life, to which excessive cold and excessive heat are alike fatal;—and observe how wonderfully this want is provided for. A viewless fluid, far more subtile even than the air, is diffused around us and within us, which cherishes and maintains the vital principle; but which, if augmented in quantity

beyond certain limits, would consume our frames to ashes, or if diminished below a certain point, would leave them stiffened in the coldness of death. And though this subtile fluid is subject to perpetual variations in quantity, and fluctuates by the slightest causes from heat to cold and from cold to heat; yet in all its fluctuations it is never either increased or diminished beyond those narrow limits within which only life is able to subsist. How slender in this instance appears the thread on which our existence hangs! How slight the boundary which separates between life and death! Yet we continue to live; and under the self same circumstances the race of man, and countless tribes of inferior animals, have through a long succession of ages been preserved in being.

Facts of a similar kind might be adduced in endless number, for the subject is boundless as nature itself. But these few will be sufficient for the present argument. Finding ourselves placed in a world which is so obviously fitted for our abode; finding our support and comfort provided for by a system of means so complicated, so nicely adjusted between the possibilities of failure, and yet so unerring and constant

in their operation; what can we infer but that the end was contemplated and the means devised by a Supreme Intelligence? To say that chance produced this system, is an absurdity too gross to be seriously combated: it is to say that a principle of confusion gives birth to the most exact and beautiful arrangement; that a principle upon which you cannot for a moment calculate, maintains the most undeviating uniformity; and that a principle which implies the total absence of all design, has created a system which rivals in its apparent contrivance the productions of the most exalted wisdom.—Nor is it more satisfactory or more intelligible to ascribe the production and maintenance of this system to the laws of nature, or to a certain blind unconscious principle of order, which operates eternally by some unaccountable necessity, without volition and without design. This is language not at all intelligible: this is substituting the means for the cause; or saying that the effect is the cause of itself. For what are the laws of nature, but merely the mode in which the changes or phænomena of nature uniformly take place; which uniformity, so far from appearing worthy to be considered as an ultimate cause, is only a circumstance of

the effect, more forcibly leading us to the belief of an intelligent Artist, by whose wisdom that mode of operation has been chosen? Who can comprehend a principle of action destitute of all intelligence, or laws operating of themselves, without either a mind to devise them, or a will to carry them into execution? This then is the conclusion to which all our observations of the frame of nature irresistibly lead us, that there is a Supreme Intelligence, which planned, which produced, and which regulates the world.

Strongly, however, as this conclusion is pressed upon us by those marks of design which appear in the adaptation of this world to the wants and comforts of its inhabitants, much more will this great truth be established, if tokens of a higher and more extensive design than the mere support of our present existence can be pointed out. Without, indeed, some evidence of this ulterior design, the argument for the existence of God, can hardly be considered as complete. For however much and however justly we may admire the exquisite organization and beautiful regularity of nature; however numerous and striking may be those instances of contrivance which have in view

merely the preservation and comfort of this present life; yet in this inquiry the question must ever recur,—for what purpose was life bestowed, and all this grand apparatus provided for its maintenance? What is the object, and what will be the final issue, of our present existence? We know that our continuance here is limited to a very short duration, and that we are subject, moreover, to a multiplicity of evils, which render the boon of life, in itself considered, of somewhat doubtful value. It is a brief and troubled existence. We come; we fret our hour upon the stage; and straight are seen no more. If there be, indeed, a God, we are surely justified in expecting something further, in his designs respecting us, than what we actually experience. For being once led to the idea of God, by those evident marks of contrivance and design, which appear in the world around us, our reason can set no limits to his power or wisdom, nor imagine any motive but that of benevolence to actuate and direct his proceedings. The power which brought all beings and all worlds into existence, must surely retain its control over all the objects of its own creation; and he who has seen the origin and progress of all things, who is the

cause of all effects, the prime mover of all the operations of nature, the giver of all life, and the source of all intelligence, must necessarily possess all knowledge, and be incapable, therefore, of error in any of his plans. Such a being as this cannot be conceived to act from motives of malevolence, for malevolence is only felt where there is the experience or apprehension of injury; and from what quarter can injury reach Almighty power? As little can we suppose him capable of acting from caprice; for caprice is indicative of folly or ignorance, and is utterly, therefore, incompatible with that perfect knowledge and wisdom which we cannot but ascribe to the creator of all things. Benevolence, then, is the only motive which we can suppose to actuate the Deity, if a Deity indeed exists. Independently of all observation of fact, we cannot but presume, that wherever he bestows existence, he bestows it with a kind intent, and means to make his gift a blessing. But now from reasoning let us revert to fact. Do we find our actual condition to correspond with these our natural presumptions? Is our existence, considered as finally terminating at death, a boon worthy of such an author as we suppose? I hesitate not to

answer in the negative. A life so short, and subject to such a multiplicity of evils; powers of mind so noble, given only to be buried in the grave; an insatiate thirst for knowledge and happiness implanted within us only to tantalize us with a taste of the cup which is soon to be snatched from our longing lips; a mind that directs its ken and wings its eagle flight towards heaven, only to be arrested in its upward course and dragged again to dust and nothingness;—this is what I cannot reconcile with that conclusion which the admirable frame of nature so strongly prompts. An existence such as this, if this indeed be all which is intended for us, appears by no means worthy of that amazing display of power and wisdom which we find in the apparatus provided for its support. In order, then, to account satisfactorily for the appearances of the world, which would otherwise present a dark enigma, we are compelled to suppose that the counsels of Heaven look forward for their completion to a future state. This supposition, while unsupported by more direct evidence, is nothing more, we admit, than a plausible presumption. And were this all on which we grounded our expectation of futurity, we should certainly lie open to the

charge of arguing in a circle. The writer, whose ingenious objections on this high subject have already been in part stated and combated, has ably urged this charge against the common mode of argument,* and it must be admitted that he here proceeds upon strong ground. It is only by his works, he argues, that the character of the Deity can be known; and we have no right to ascribe to him greater perfections than we actually see displayed. If the manifestation of his justice in the distribution of rewards and punishments be here imperfect, the proper inference is that his justice is itself imperfect. To ascribe to him a degree of this attribute far beyond what facts will warrant, and then to imagine a future state where this more perfect justice will be manifested, is only building conjecture upon conjecture, without the shadow of evidence to support it.† But if it can be shown that there are manifestations in the present state of *a design which necessarily, by its nature, points to futurity*, this objection will be wholly groundless. Such a design I conceive to be discoverable in those circumstances of our present condition which render

* See Hume's Enquiry concerning Human Understanding. Sec. xi.

† Note N.

it fit for the purpose of moral education or discipline. But before entering into any detail of these circumstances, let us first consider the subject *a priori*, and see if we cannot discover, in the nature of things, the necessary reason, and precise objects, of this purpose which we suppose.

Reasoning antecedently upon the subject, we are apt to wonder why the Deity, if he be indeed benevolent, should not have created us at once perfect and happy. Why is there any evil at all in a world produced and governed by such a Deity?—is a question which the inquiring mind has often anxiously proposed, and which perhaps the human understanding, in its present limited state, is incompetent fully to resolve. To say that it was not within the power of God, to endow us at once, from the first moment of our creation, with that extent of knowledge and comprehension of mind, which would have precluded all possibility of error and misery, would seem a bold and unwarrantable assertion. Yet when it is considered that every created being, unless he be made equal to the Deity himself, must necessarily be made finite and imperfect, it is obvious

that, however high we had been placed in the scale of existence, room would still have remained for improvement, and the question, "why were we not made better and happier than we are?" might still have been proposed. And if we only suppose that we are placed, at our introduction into existence, at the commencement of a course of gradual improvement, in which we are destined continually to advance through all eternity, the difficulty will at least be lessened, if not entirely removed. *Imperfection*, in some degree, must necessarily attach to all created beings; and *progressive improvement* appears not less necessary to their enjoyment of existence. For in action consists happiness; and where would be the motive or object of action to beings whose condition admitted of no improvement? Without hopes to interest our minds, without objects of pursuit to employ our attention, existence even in the most exalted condition would soon become tiresome and insipid. And if continual improvement be necessary to our happiness, what is there inconsistent with the wisdom or goodness of the Deity, in supposing that all his creatures are made to commence at the lowest stage of a career of improvement which will never ter-

minate? I question, indeed, whether it be not in the nature of things impossible that it should be otherwise. The creation of mind seems, if we duly consider it, to be necessarily a gradual process. What, indeed, is mind, but the result of a vast variety of impressions, which impressions could never have left any traces in the memory, had they not been *distinctly*, that is *successively*, communicated. To suppose the instantaneous creation of extensive knowledge and high intellectual powers, is to suppose, either that memory may be exercised without previous experience, which is a contradiction in terms, or that a countless multitude of impressions may be instantly felt, analysed, and discriminated;—a miracle far more incredible than any alleged departure from the course of nature in the phænomena of matter, and which to me appears to border upon absolute impossibility. If this be true of the acquisition of knowledge in general, it is true of the acquisition of moral knowledge, and consequently of moral habits and dispositions. What but the actual experience of good and evil can create the power of properly discriminating between them? The predominance of moral principle, the enlightened preference of virtue

to vice, implies the conception of a great variety of modes of conduct, and the knowledge of their respective influence upon individual and social happiness; and how but by the gradual process of experience, can we conceive this knowledge to be acquired? We cannot, indeed, pretend to judge of what may be possible or impossible under a constitution of nature different from that which we find established; but this, at least, we may pronounce with confidence, that *minds analogous to those of human beings* cannot be created but by the same slow and gradual process. The human mind is a great aggregate of sensations;—a structure gradually built up by a long succession of impressions, and deriving from these impressions all its character. No idea, no habit, no affection or disposition ever belongs to it, but what arises, by the necessary connexion of cause and effect, from the impressions by which it has been gradually formed; and it is altogether inconceivable how such knowledge or such feelings as human beings possess, should arise by any other means. If these views, then, be correct, our present state of existence must be considered with reference to the means which it affords of forming our character and training

us to intellectual and moral excellence. But in order to judge of its fitness for this purpose, we should first consider what are the qualities of mind which it must be the object of the Deity to form in his offspring, supposing him desirous of rendering them as happy as their finite nature allows. Now what happiness can we conceive so refined and exquisite in its nature, and so unlimited in its capability of augmentation, as that which springs from the union of *active employment*, *benevolent affections*, and *continually increasing knowledge*. Without employment, existence would soon grow tiresome and insipid. Without social intercourse and the interchange of kind offices and kind affections, we should be capable only of sensual happiness, which admits neither of long continuance, nor of augmentation beyond a certain limit. And without continually increasing knowledge, we should necessarily stop at a certain point of improvement, and the dull repetition of the same ideas, the continued recurrence of the same familiar objects, would deprive existence of all its charm. Doubtless it must have been possible for the Deity, to have created a universe of beings altogether detached from one another, and to have ren-

dered them, in such a state, capable of enjoying a certain kind and a certain degree of happiness. But it must have been such happiness only, as that of which a shell-fish is capable. Is it not far more suitable to the conceptions which we cannot but form respecting him, to suppose that he designs to unite his creatures in one grand system of social harmony, to render them instrumental in promoting the happiness of one another, and to train them to that enlarged state of mind which will make every individual feel interested, not in his own welfare only, but in that of all his fellow creatures? Who can doubt that, in such a condition, we are capable of enjoying a far more exalted and exquisite happiness, than we could possibly experience in a detached and independent state? Who does not see, that our sources of enjoyment must be, by such means, infinitely multiplied; that objects of employment must be furnished us in inexhaustible abundance, and boundless scope allowed us for intellectual and moral improvement?—Such being the presumptions which antecedent reasoning leads us to form respecting the design of our existence, let us proceed to consider the circumstances of our present condition, and see how far they correspond with these presumptions.

1. The first obvious feature of our condition in this world, is *the necessity, in which we are placed, of active exertion.* The means of comfortable subsistence are not offered immediately to our hands, but are only to be procured by toil and forethought. To the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, nature spontaneously furnishes whatsoever their wants require. They need no banquet but the herbage and the stream; no roof but the canopy of heaven; no clothing but that which nature has caused to grow upon their bodies. But man is sent forth into the world dependent on his own foresight and exertions for all that he requires. "By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread," is obviously the great law of his present condition. Labour and preparation are necessary, before the earth will yield the food which is suitable for his support; and further labour and preparation are required, before that food becomes fit for his consumption. He must watch the seasons; he must till the ground with painful labour, and having deposited the seed at the appointed time, he must wait with patience till a distant period for the reward of his exertions. To guard from chilling winds his tender and defenceless frame, he must borrow a covering

from other animals, and convert it by various operations of skill and labour, into a vesture suitable for himself. To obtain a place of shelter and repose, he must exert his strength and ingenuity, to construct, from the rude materials which nature furnishes, a dwelling such as his habits and his frame require. A thousand things are requisite for his comfort and convenience beyond what nature unaided can provide, and it is only by his own exertions that those wants can be supplied. Such, in short, is the condition of mankind, that, in every state of society, from the rudest to the most refined, and in every rank, from the labourer to the ruler, all, with very few exceptions, are under the necessity of engaging in some active occupation. And is not this law of our condition a wise and benignant law? Trained thus to habits of exertion; compelled thus to exercise ingenuity and foresight for attaining the supply of our wants, or the gratification of our desires, are we not by these means improved? Do we not by these means acquire qualities of mind which form the foundation of intellectual and moral excellence, and which may fit us for entering hereafter with advantage into far more dignified and important pursuits?

2. The next circumstance which marks the design of our present existence, is *our intimate connexion with, and mutual dependence upon, one another.* Nothing, among all the circumstances of our condition, can be more evident, than the design to train us for the social state. Born as we are in a state of the most helpless dependence upon others; nourished and supported by the care of others through a long period of childhood; still in more advanced life deriving from society our chief enjoyments; forming continually wider and more numerous connexions, and perpetually brought into contact with one another in the transactions of life; is there not in these circumstances an evident provision made for giving a taste and fitness for social happiness? There is no condition of human life which is insulated and independent; no individual of the human race who can rely solely upon his own resources, and boast that he neither needs the services, nor fears the enmity of his fellow men. In whatever condition of life we may be placed, we feel that we are dependent upon others for the best of our enjoyments. By daily experience we find that our own happiness is inseparably connected with the happiness of others, and that we can-

not possibly secure the one independently of the other. So long as we fulfil the apparent intentions of nature, by mutually contributing to each other's welfare, by supplying the wants, by helping the weakness, by sharing in the joys and sorrows of each other; so long the business of life proceeds smoothly and harmoniously, and happiness crowns our mutual intercourse. But whenever selfish passions interfere, and lead us to invade each other's rights, to interrupt each other's comfort, and disregard each other's welfare, then discord and misery invariably ensue. Such is the general constitution of society, and it is a constitution which obviously tends to generate social and benevolent dispositions. But this tendency is yet more apparent in certain closer and more peculiar relations in which we are placed. By the wise appointment of Providence, which shows herein its solicitude from the very first to train us to a fitness for the social state, we are brought into the world members each of a little community, whose tender endearments solicit the awakened faculties of the growing mind, and withdrawing its attention from its own immediate sensations, teach it gradually to extend its regards to others. Even in childhood we find that we live not for

ourselves alone, but for our parents, our brethren, and our relatives, whose wishes and interests are all so closely interwoven with our own. In more advanced life, we enter into still nearer connexions, and he who late was only a subordinate member in the family of another, finds himself at length surrounded by another and yet dearer family, which acknowledges him as its head, and looks up to him for support, protection, and guidance. Thus situated, he feels his own existence renewed in his descendants, and owns their powerful claim to all his best exertions. His views, his desires, his hopes are now no longer centred in himself, but transferred to those whom his expanded heart acknowledges to be dearer than self. He lives, he breathes, for them;—for them he toils, for them he watches with unceasing care;—for them he cheerfully foregoes his own ease and pleasure, and asks no other recompense than their gratitude and love. Bound by such tender and such powerful ties, he feels an interest in life and its concerns which he never felt before. He feels himself invested with new dignity and importance as a member of society, and finds himself connected by closer bonds than heretofore with his neighbours, with his country, with mankind. Thus,

"Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake;
The centre moved, a circle straight succeeds,
Another still, and still another spreads;
Friend, parent, neighbour, first it will embrace,
His country next, and next all human race;
Wide and more wide th' o'erflowings of the mind,
Take every creature in of every kind;
Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest,
And heaven beholds its image in his breast."

3. It appears, then, from what has thus far been observed, that, being placed in a social state, where we are closely united by mutual dependence and by a common interest, and in a state, moreover, where active exertion is indispensable to our very existence, the supposed purpose of our present condition is so far answered, that not only a field is opened for the exercise of those qualities which constitute the perfection of intelligent and rational beings, but the strongest inducements also are given us to the cultivation of them, by their absolute necessity to our happiness. Our situation, we see, is so ordered that we cannot abandon the active duties of life, or disregard the happiness of others, without bringing suffering upon ourselves. Thus far, then, there is an evident design perceivable, to educate us in such a way

as will render us active, intelligent, and social beings. But this design will be yet more strikingly manifested, if we pay a more particular attention to *the moral government of the world*, and *the moral constitution of man*. Complaints have very frequently been made of the indiscriminate distribution of good and ill among mankind, and of the imperfect exercise in this world of a retributive Providence. And this circumstance has been repeatedly urged as one of the strongest arguments in favour of a future state, where this inequality, it is supposed, will be rectified, and virtue and vice receive their just award. Upon further inquiry, however, I trust it will appear, both that the complaint itself is unfounded, and that, by taking a somewhat different view of the moral government of the world, we obtain such evidence of a future state as lies not open to any just objection. For the alleged imperfection of moral retribution in this world, if such were the fact, would rather be a proof, as Mr. Hume contends, of imperfect justice or benevolence in the Deity, than a just ground for expecting a more complete retribution in a future state. But if it can be shown that virtue and happiness, vice and misery, are even here inseparably connected, this will tend

to corroborate the supposition, that the formation and improvement of character, with a view to futurity, is the great end of our present existence.

The chief source of the mistaken notions which have so much prevailed on this subject, consists in this; that men have not sufficiently adverted to the mixed nature of all human character, and have expected rewards and punishments beyond the natural consequences of our conduct. In our rude way of estimating character, we refer all men to one or other of two great classes: and if we observe severe misfortunes befalling any of those whom we rank among the good, while the favours of fortune are showered upon others who belong in our estimation to the class of the wicked, we hastily reckon this as an instance of defective retribution. But the truth is, that no one is virtuous and no one vicious but in part; and, upon further inquiry, it will be found, in many instances, that what are thought to be the undeserved sufferings of the virtuous, are in reality the natural evil consequences of some wrong disposition accompanying their better qualities, and are, therefore, to be considered rather as

confirming, than furnishing exceptions to, the doctrine I have advanced. The moral government of God is manifested, at least in this world, not by the annexation of arbitrary rewards and punishments to particular actions, but only by those consequences which *naturally* and *necessarily* flow from good or evil conduct. And if we limit our expectations to these, we shall find it to hold universally true, that every good disposition is followed, even here, by its own appropriate reward, consisting in its natural good effects upon our happiness, and that, on the other hand, every evil passion or desire is also productive of its own kind, and its own degree of suffering. The complaint of Solomon, that "there be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked, and wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous,"* is by no means just, if we look only at the proper effects of their respective modes of conduct. The man who is destitute of all good feelings and right principles, who is selfish, crafty, mean, and grasping, uninfluenced by any restraint but that of the lowest prudence, shall rise, it may be, from small beginnings to a state of affluence

* Ecclesiastes. Ch. viii, v. 14.

and distinction, of which we judge him altogether unworthy; while another of generous heart and scrupulous principles, whom we esteem deserving of the richest gifts of fortune, shall struggle all his life with narrow circumstances. But if the former, notwithstanding his general worthlessness, must be allowed the praise of persevering industry, careful economy, and strict punctuality; of vigilance in observing, and promptitude in seizing, every favourable opportunity of gain or aggrandizement; while the latter, with all his noble qualities, has unfortunately united habits of indolence, thoughtlessness, and profusion; how can we wonder at the success of the one and the embarrassment of the other, or what ground is here afforded for impeaching the distributive justice of providence? Each has his own appropriate reward; each feels the natural consequences of his particular qualities; the one in affluence imbittered by a mind incapable of relishing its best enjoyments; the other in penury alleviated and sweetened by the exercise of kind affections, and the consciousness of integrity. It may, indeed, sometimes happen, that the natural consequences of certain modes of conduct shall not be fully experienced. Unto-

ward incidents may baffle the strenuous exertions of industry. Misfortunes, which it was not possible to foresee, may counteract the wisest and the best conducted schemes. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill."* This is the necessary result of that liability to natural calamity, which is another feature of our condition hereafter to be considered. But no circumstances of fortune can altogether destroy or change the natural tendencies of good and evil conduct. The man of mean and fraudulent character, who scruples not the basest means of gain, may succeed, we know, in amassing wealth, and escape by his craftiness from that disgrace or punishment which detection would bring upon him; but is it possible that he should enjoy that ease of mind, that self-esteem, that unembarrassed openness of heart, that entire freedom from fear and perplexity, which are the never-failing concomitants of strict integrity? The tyrant, or the oppressor, secure in the possession of power, may bid defiance to the hatred which he inspires; but is it possible that he should be

* Ecclesiastes, Ch. ix. v. 11.

regarded by the victims of his cruelty with any other feelings than those of abhorrence? When were envious and malignant passions ever void of torment? When did the mild spirit of forgiveness ever fail to tranquillize the breast, and to confer that inward satisfaction which injuries cannot reach? Thus if we look, not at adventitious circumstances, but at the proper effects of good or evil dispositions upon our happiness, we shall find that there is a moral government uniformly exercised over the world; that virtue and happiness, guilt and pain, are bound together, even in this world, by indissoluble links; and that, consequently, there is a tendency in the circumstances of our condition to lead us onward in the career of moral improvement.*

But the moral government of the world cannot be fully understood, without taking into consideration at the same time the moral constitution of man,—that constitution by which he is gradually led on from those lowest principles of action which are common to him with the brutes, to higher and yet higher principles, till he becomes capable of being actuated by the pure disinterested love of virtue. The

* Note O.

lowest of all our principles of action is that which consists in the desires or aversions that regard the pleasures and pains of sense. To act with a view to some more distant advantage, with a view, for instance, to the acquirement of gain, which is only valued at first as the power of procuring the pleasures of sense, is a step in advance towards intellectual and moral improvement; and he who foregoes some immediate sensual gratification, or endures some present pain, for the sake of this distant advantage, is virtuous, when compared with him who can be influenced only by the pleasure or pain of the present moment. Now, who will say that this degree of virtue does not meet with its appropriate reward? What reward can be reasonably expected beyond the natural result of this prudent choice? 'Tis true, the expectation of this result may sometimes be frustrated by the occurrence of some of those calamities to which our condition is subject. But the risk of these calamities was known at the time the sacrifice was made; and still it was a wise and prudent sacrifice. And why should not he who makes it, abide all consequences of his choice? Would you give him back those very gratifications, which he has so

wisely relinquished with the hope of something better? This would be to subvert the whole order of nature, and to destroy that connexion between means and ends, which is the essential circumstance of a state of discipline. Would you exempt him from those natural calamities which have chanced to frustrate his expectations? This would amount to the entire removal of all natural evil from the world, and thus take away the grand incitement to action, and the means which are necessary, as we shall hereafter show, to our moral and intellectual improvement. No; let him abide the consequences of his choice. He cannot often fail to reap the fruits of his foresight, by gaining the distant advantage for which he sacrifices an immediate inferior gratification. And if his expectation be frustrated, he has still the satisfaction of thinking that he made a wise choice, and a choice which he would make again in similar circumstances.—Again, to be influenced by a regard to the opinions of men is a step still further in advance towards moral excellence; and he who abstains from certain means of gain, because they are such as would bring contempt or disgrace upon him, is virtuous in comparison with him who values emolument

higher than he values a good name. Neither in this case can it be alleged with reason, that virtue, so far as virtue is evinced, loses its proper reward. The man who makes this sacrifice, obtains of course the object for the sake of which he made it. He escapes the infamy which he would otherwise have incurred; he maintains his reputation spotless. And what further reward would you give him? Not surely the sordid gain itself, by foregoing which he has purchased his exemption from disgrace? And wherefore should he be enriched in any other way, unless he apply the means which are naturally instrumental to the acquirement of riches? Why should he be considered more deserving than others of the gifts of fortune, when he already possesses a full equivalent for the gain which he has sacrificed? But you think it wrong, perhaps, and inconsistent with the notion of a retributive Providence, that the man who can resort to these sordid means of gain, should be allowed to succeed? Pursue the objection through all its consequences, and it will amount to no less than this, that vice ought not in any instance to be attended even by that inferior and immediate gratification which is all that tempts to the

commission of it; and as this would be to say, that we ought not to have been made imperfect beings; that we ought not to have been made liable to error; that we ought not to have been placed at all in a state of discipline, where good and evil in various shapes are set before us as a means of forming our minds and training us to intellectual and moral excellence;—the objection is already answered by the general tenor of all the foregoing observations which have been offered in explanation of our present condition.—Advancing then another step in the gradation of our active principles, let us, in the case above supposed, instead of that motive which has regard to reputation merely, substitute that higher motive which regards the approbation of conscience, or of God. The step is not so wide as may be at first supposed; for the restraint of conscience is derived, as we have seen, by a very natural and easy process, from the restraint which is imposed by a regard to the opinions of men. To that principle of action it even bears considerable resemblance; for let any one narrowly scrutinize his heart, when he is listening to what is called the voice of conscience, and he will find that there is a secret reference made in his mind,

not to the actual sentiments of men, nor to the sentiments of the undiscerning multitude, but to those of some select few, whose approbation alone he considers as deserving of regard, or of some imaginary spectator whom he conceives to attend him in his deepest retirement, and even to penetrate into his inmost thoughts. Be this, however, as it may, the man of fixed principles of virtue has acquired a taste, not for *praise* only, but for *praiseworthiness.* He desires not merely *to be esteemed*, but to be *worthy of esteem.* He dreads not merely *to be censured*, but to be *deserving of censure.** This is his taste; and when, to gratify this taste, he sacrifices some object of inferior value in his eyes;—when, for the sake of preserving the consciousness of deserving esteem, he foregoes some sensual gratification, or some sordid interest, or some temporary applause, he follows the dictates of his inclination not less than he who sacrifices pleasure for the sake of gain, or gain for the sake of reputation. And he reaps not less the proper reward of his judicious choice—the applauding testimony of his own conscience. Is not this enough for him? Is not this a gratification superior far to what he

* See Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments. Part iii. ch. ii.

sacrifices for its attainment? Would you in addition give him other sensual enjoyments, other acquisitions of gain, or other honours, to compensate for those which he has so wisely relinquished? But if such compensation were uniformly made, it would be uniformly expected; and where then would be the merit of the sacrifice? where then would be the proof of that refinement in the taste and affections of the individual, which constitutes the virtuous character? No—let him enjoy the natural and appropriate reward of his conduct, in that sweet testimony of an approving conscience, which he has justly learnt to value as the most inestimable of all the means of happiness.—Thus it is that we should reason respecting the moral government of the world. We must never lose sight of that strict connexion between means and ends, which invariably obtains in the moral, as well as in the physical world. We must consider virtue as consisting in certain refined tastes and affections, which necessarily bring their own gratification, and which cannot be disappointed of that gratification by any thing which may befall. To look for any other reward than this, would be about as reasonable as to think of rewarding the virtues of man-

hood with the toys or indulgences of childhood.*

This gradual refinement of our taste and affections, which arises from the natural operation of the laws of the human mind, affords in itself convincing evidence of a future state, since it shows most clearly that the *improvement of character* is the object contemplated in our present condition of being.

4. A fourth fact entitled to great attention in this review of the circumstances of our condition, is *the diversity of human character.* The cause of this diversity will be a subject of future inquiry. All that I now wish to be attended to, is the fact, which is sufficiently obvious, that different men are marked by different tendencies of conduct and disposition. No individual is either wholly exempt from every wrong propensity, or subject in the same degree to all propensities; but each is distinguished by some peculiarity of character, which renders some duties easy and agreeable, while it presents strong temptations to the neglect of others; and according to their different constitutions of

* Note P.

body, their different experience and education, or their different circumstances of life, men are distinguished by infinite varieties of feeling, opinion, and behaviour. Now if the design of our existence be such as I have supposed, this circumstance not only corresponds with that design, but affords peculiar evidence of wisdom and goodness in the prosecution of it. I have already endeavoured to show that the formation of moral character must necessarily be a gradual process; that moral knowledge, like every other kind of knowledge, can be only the slowly acquired result of observation and experience. But it is obvious that, were each individual compelled to acquire this knowledge by experiencing in *his own person* the evil consequences of every vice, the period of our education would be extremely prolonged, and far greater than what is actually appointed, would be our share of suffering. But being placed in a state of society where various characters are submitted to our observation, we are thereby spared this long and painful discipline, and our progress in moral improvement is greatly hastened and facilitated. For in our intercourse with one another, we find examples of every good and of every evil quality, with all

their respective consequences fully displayed. Thus we are enabled to profit by others' experience as well as by our own; and as the lively interest which we take in one another's conduct, on account of our mutual power over each other's happiness, is perpetually calling our attention to the qualities of conduct and character, we are constantly gathering moral improvement from the daily business and intercourse of life. Without this diversity of character among men, society would tend rather to confirm, than to amend, our errors. For were all men subject in the same degree to the same errors, and equally disposed to practise the same virtues, their commonness would make them unremarked as such. The general prevalence of the same virtues and the same vices would rob the former of that distinction which renders them respected, and screen the latter from that disgrace which serves to punish and restrain them. But constituted as society is, it is constantly a school of virtue. The contrast of our various characters displays with more advantage the loveliness of virtue and the hatefulness of vice. The good qualities which one man wants, he sees exemplified in the character of another; while the latter

profits in his turn by observing in the former what reminds him of his own deficiencies. Thus in our intercourse with one another we are constantly giving and receiving lessons of moral instruction, and without intending it, contribute mutually to each other's advancement in virtue.

5. Another important circumstance of our condition, which requires our particular attention in relation to this subject, is our *liability to evil.* The existence of evil in the world has been, from time immemorial, a subject of great perplexity to the human mind. In every period it has engaged the researches of the learned, the speculations of the inquiring, and the thoughts of all; for who is there exempt from visitations of sorrow, and what mind the least disposed to reflection can refrain, under such visitations, from asking, whence and wherefore the anguish which it feels? "Is the Deity," it has been said, "willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then is he not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then is he not benevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?"* The difficulty, I think, has been already in

* Hume's Dialogues concerning Natural Religion. Part x.

part removed by what has been said above of the necessity of our being created imperfect, and of the slow and gradual process which must be followed in the formation of mind. And though this doctrine compels us to admit the former part of the dilemma just stated, yet by showing a necessary impossibility in the case, it derogates no more from the omnipotence of God, than saying that he cannot alter the relations of numbers, or make a contradiction true. Liability to pain, if not essential to our nature as sentient beings, is at least essential to the formation of those qualities which constitute us active, intelligent, and social beings. Let us only endeavour to imagine what we must have been without the experience of pain. It seems essential to the very nature of pleasure, to render the mind satisfied with its present feelings; and equally essential to the nature of pain, to create a desire of change. A state of continual pleasure must, therefore, necessarily be a state of inaction. It could not possibly afford occasion for the exercise of volition, nor lead to that analysis of our complex perceptions, which is the necessary means of acquiring distinct ideas. It is solely by the operation of our wants, which all arise from the experience of some degree of

pain, that our faculties of attention, memory, and judgment are called into exercise.* Without pain, therefore, to generate desires, and to call the intellectual faculties into exercise, we must have continued stationary in the lowest stage of sensitive existence, the passive recipients of changing sensations, but untaught to analyse or remember them, untaught to choose or reject among them, and incapable therefore of any advance in intellectual attainments. It has been suggested, indeed, by a writer to whom we have more than once referred, that a *diminution of pleasure* alone might be sufficient for the purpose of exciting to action.† To which I answer, that a diminution of pleasure, in any considerable degree, or after a long continuance of the pleasure, must partake of the nature of pain. If the diminution be inconsiderable, and pleasure still continue predominant, desire and action will not ensue. This observation, moreover, leads us to remark how undefinable are the limits of pleasure and pain; how much they blend and intermix with one another; how much they depend on contrast and comparison with one another, and how dif-

* Note Q.

† See Hume's Dialogues concerning Natural Religion. Part xi.

ficult it consequently is to conceive the possibility of a state of happiness unmixed with or uninterrupted by pain. A large portion of our enjoyments are actually created by our pains, and could not possibly have existed independently of them. The pleasure of ease is never felt till after labour has induced fatigue. The blessing of health is duly valued only by those who have languished on the bed of sickness. And it is only after periods of danger or disturbance that we justly appreciate the advantages of security and peace. If such be the effects of contrast with respect to pleasure and pain, the same law must extend to their offspring, virtue and vice. It seems hardly possible that the one should be duly known and appreciated except by the help of contrast with the other. At least it is not possible that the one should be the object of approbation and choice, and the other of blame and aversion, without some experience or observation of the effects of each. A large proportion of the evils which we suffer, may be clearly shown to be instrumental to our improvement, by either inciting us to the exertion of our faculties, or serving as the corrective of our erroneous conduct. What is it that renders human life a scene of constant activity, and

gives occasion for such variety of useful and improving occupation, but our multiplied wants, or in other words, the evils which we desire to remove or guard against? What is it that teaches us to look beyond the present moment, and leads us to act upon comprehensive views of futurity, but the mischiefs which our heedlessness of the future so repeatedly brings upon us? What is it, in short, that teaches us the value of all the virtues; what is it that has given mankind the very notion of duty, but the miseries which invariably spring from vice? Take away from vice its unhappy consequences, and what will remain to distinguish it from virtue, and to render it any longer an object of abhorrence? This, I contend, is the description, and this the use of by far the greater proportion of the sufferings which we experience; —they are such as our own folly has inflicted, or our own efforts may remove. It is the general character of the evils of human life, that they lead to their own correction, and in so doing incite us to active exertion, and form our minds to wisdom and virtue.

Many evils, however, it must be allowed, there are, which come not under this descrip-

tion;—evils which no foresight of ours can prevent, and which no efforts, when they have befallen us, can remedy or remove. Such are the various calamities of nature, diseases, losses, disappointments, death: such are the wrongs and vexations which we are liable to suffer from the prejudices, enmity, or misconduct of our fellow men. The consideration of the latter class demands our first and chief attention, as it will furnish the best explanation of the former. If it be necessary, as we have endeavoured to prove, that all the creatures of God should be, at the commencement of their existence, imperfect and fallible; if it be also necessary for the purpose of leading us to the highest degrees of moral and intellectual excellence, and of rendering us capable of the highest possible happiness, that we should be placed in a social state, and trained to the exercise of those dispositions which the social state requires; it plainly follows, as an equally necessary consequence, that we must be subject to mutual annoyance from one another's misconduct. So long as we are fallible creatures, and placed in such a condition as makes the happiness of each dependent on the conduct of others, this is evidently an unavoidable circumstance of our

lot. And what better means can be imagined of training us to benevolence, than making us instrumental in correcting the errors, and contributing to the moral improvement of each other? In doing this the exercise of *patience* and *forbearance* is indispensably necessary. Without these qualities we are in no fit temper for bearing with the infirmities of our erring brethren, but only aggravate our own vexation, and confirm, by our undue resentment, the errors which occasion it. Patience and forbearance are qualities perpetually called for in our intercourse with men, and if the design and prospects of our existence be such as we have supposed, *they will be requisite in every future period of our being.* I am well aware, how startling and offensive this sentiment will be to those who have been taught to expect a futurity of perfect, unmixed, and passive enjoyment: but I shrink not from a consequence which is necessarily involved in the whole tenor of the foregoing argument. The future state which I have all along supposed, is not that state of final retribution,—of perfect happiness, or of perfect misery, which is held up in the popular systems of theology; but merely the continuation of that career of moral and intel-

lectual improvement which we have here commenced. If so, it evidently is not reasonable to expect that the renewal of our existence will be attended by any essential change in our character or our condition. The very notion of identity forbids such expectation. If we ever awake from the sleep of death, we must awake the same in mind, the same in all moral and intellectual attainments, as the hour of dissolution found us. The course of our education must be resumed precisely at the point where it was interrupted by death, and into whatever new scenes we may be introduced, with whatever new faculties we may be endowed, the circumstances of our condition, and the means employed for our continued improvement, must still be, in all essential points, the same. We shall still be imperfect and fallible beings; we shall still have objects of employment set before us; we shall still be bound together by social ties, and be made instrumental still in contributing to each other's improvement. Patience and forbearance, therefore, will be not less necessary in the future, than they are in the present state; and in all probability they will continue to be wanted in every period of our future existence; for in every period we may

expect to be occupied in the exalted office of aiding in the formation and improvement of other minds; in doing which we must often have to deal with somewhat of that ignorance, wilfulness, and error, which try our temper here. But the exercise of these virtues will not always, we may presume, be difficult and painful, as at present. The further we advance towards that perfection of character which consists in the total annihilation of all selfish feelings, the more shall we be elevated above the power of evil to disturb us; till at length we shall feel, in the exercise of a wise forbearance accompanying our benevolent exertions, a delight of that refined and exalted kind, with which no selfish joys can bear comparison.

The only evils, then, which remain unexplained, are those calamities of nature which are neither the consequences of our own errors, nor such as admit of remedy by our own exertions. These constitute the greatest difficulty presented to us in the moral government of the world, because we cannot show for these the same necessity in the nature of things, which has served to account for those of the former class. They are evils appa-

rently of arbitrary appointment, for which it is not easy to find either a necessity or a use. According, indeed, to the common notions of a future state, their usefulness in one respect, is altogether precluded. They serve, it is said, to teach us patience. True; but why learn a virtue, which in the imagined mansions of the blessed, where perfect virtue and perfect happiness reign, will be no longer needed? But if the view, which we have taken, of the nature of futurity be correct; if patience will be still, in those new scenes of our existence, requisite for the endurance of evils of a certain class, is it not important that we should by every means be trained and exercised therein? Do not the sufferings which nature inflicts, tend to prepare us better for those unavoidable ills which flow from our connexion with fallible and imperfect beings? This idea is worthy, I think, of some consideration. But there is also a more direct and immediate use in evils of this description. If the design of our existence be such as we have supposed; if the present state be intended, not as a state of ultimate enjoyment, but only as the first stage in a career of endless improvement, does it not seem evidently wise and proper that we should be led to regard it in

this light?—that we should be warned occasionally of the temporary duration of our present life, of the uncertain tenure of present enjoyments, and of the consequent unfitness of present objects to engage our sole affections and our final hopes? That such is actually the effect of our sufferings, is a fact too obvious to be denied; for when are we so prone, as in seasons of adversity, to look forward with hope to future scenes; and what but the general feeling of the unsatisfactory nature of the present world, has inspired among mankind the universal expectation of a world to come? Besides, however, leading to this particular view of our condition, it is the tendency of suffering to produce a general enlargement of our views, and a consequent improvement of our intellectual and moral capacities. Pleasure confines our attention to the present moment. Pain impels us to escape as much as possible from our present feelings, and to seek relief in remembrance of the past or anticipation of the future. The power of thus extending our views to distant periods of time, and of making our happiness rest on a more extended basis than the sensations of the present moment, is evidently one important characteristic

of that exalted state of moral and intellectual excellence; towards which our course of discipline is presumed to be conducting us. In this view even acute corporeal pain, which seems the most gratuitous and the most useless of all our evils, admits of satisfactory explanation. By impelling us to divert our attention, as much as possible, from our present sensations, it tends to create the habit of self-command; to give us, that is, the important power, so essential to all intellectual and moral improvement, of directing the current of thought, and fixing the attention on proper objects; and by teaching us to rely for happiness on the resources of our own minds, more than on the changing sensations of the present moment, it evidently raises us in the scale of intelligence, of which the passive reception of present sensations constitutes the lowest point, and complete independence of them, the highest.*

Be it observed, moreover, how nicely the evils of human life seem adjusted, in number and degree, to the purposes that have been mentioned. While they sufficiently answer all

* Note R.

these purposes, they are rarely in any case so numerous or burdensome, as to render life altogether insupportable. Hope in general never abandons us even in our deepest sorrows. It still leads us on; still flatters us with the prospect of better days to come; still engages us in strenuous efforts to overtake that shadow of happiness, which continually flies before us as we pursue; so that we cling to life with fondness to the last, though it may not unjustly be characterized as one continued struggle with difficulties. These circumstances are altogether inexplicable, if the present be considered as the only destined scene of our existence. The world upon this supposition is altogether a dark enigma. It is not a state of unmixed misery, such as a malignant deity would have chosen for us. Nor is it, on the other hand, a state of uniform, though imperfect, enjoyment, such as we cannot but think a God of benevolence might and would have appointed, had he intended us only a temporary existence. But admit that the present life is designed as a state of education, a school of knowledge and virtue, the first stage in an endless career of intellectual and moral improvement;—and all is clear, consistent, and satisfactory. Evil appears no

longer then as a foul blot upon the face of nature, otherwise so fair;—at variance with those undoubted marks of wise and benevolent contrivance which every where meet our view. We discern its use and tendency. We see how admirably it is fitted to stimulate us to action, to call our faculties into exercise, to enlarge our views, and to render us capable of the most exalted and enduring happiness.

From this review of the leading circumstances of the human condition, we derive, I think, sufficient confirmation of all that antecedent reasoning had led us to suppose. They plainly intimate a design worthy of a Deity, and by encouraging the expectation of a future state, supply what was wanting in the proof of his existence. The works of nature irresistibly lead us to the idea of a Deity, by that astonishing apparatus, which they display, of means disposed with evident wisdom for our preservation and comfort. But here, it was observed, our inquiries cannot terminate, and the question naturally occurs, "for what purpose was life bestowed, and why this amazing power and skill exerted for its preservation?" Does the value of the gift itself correspond with the idea

of such a giver? Regarding human life in itself, we found ourselves compelled to answer in the negative. We found not here a sufficient object for such intelligence as the works of nature appear to manifest. Unable to conceive how any limit, short of absolute impossibility, should restrain the power of such a being, or how any motive, but that of benevolence, should lead him to create beings capable of happiness, we found such insuperable difficulty in accounting for the evils of the world on the supposition of this being the whole of our existence, that we were unavoidably led to the presumption of some ulterior design in the divine counsels, requiring for its completion a future state. Turning our attention, then, to the circumstances of our condition, we sought to ascertain if it afforded any evidence confirmatory of this presumption. Had no such evidence been found, we must of course have regarded the idea as a mere conjecture, possessing perhaps some small degree of probability, but not entitled to any confident belief. But such is not by any means the real nature of the case. Circumstances have been pointed out in our condition, which sufficiently evince that ulterior design which we supposed; intimating that the present state is

only the commencement of a great career of intellectual and moral improvement, which will be continued in other scenes and future periods of existence. The universal necessity imposed upon us of engaging in active employments; the social relations in which we are placed, and which are so well calculated to draw forth social affections; the close connexion which has been shown to subsist between virtue and happiness, together with the progressive nature of our moral sentiments; the diversity of human character; and that stimulus to useful exertion, that incentive to every thing great and good, which is found in what we call the ills of life;—these circumstances combined afford sufficient evidence that the formation of mind and character is the great object of the present state, and this is an object which necessarily in its own nature points to futurity. For why commence a course of improvement which is so soon to be cut short? To what purpose are these means employed to train and educate us, if there be no future scenes, for which this discipline is designed to fit us? Shall we say that it is the improvement and happiness of the *species*, rather than of *individuals*, which is the object chiefly contemplated in the divine

counsels?—that as mankind are gradually advancing in knowledge and civilization, they may at length attain a degree of improvement which will set them beyond the reach of both natural and moral evil, and render their existence, even in this world, such as to be not unworthy of the source from which it is derived? The supposition, I answer, of such perfection in man is altogether chimerical; but admitting it possible, it is far from affording equal satisfaction with that afforded by the doctrine of a future state. To say that God has regard for the species, and not for individuals, is absurd, since the species is no single object, but only an aggregate of individuals; and how can he desire the happiness of the whole, without desiring that of all the parts of which that whole consists? It may be necessary, we allow, in consulting for the welfare of a class of objects, to sacrifice sometimes the good of a part to that of the greater number. But this necessity seems properly to belong only to human or other finite benefactors, whose power and foresight are limited. At least it always argues a defective or ill-concerted plan, when the number of those whose happiness is sacrificed, bears any considerable proportion to that of the ma-

jority for whose sake the sacrifice is made. How then can we ascribe to the intelligence which governs the world, a plan which subjects to so much misery the countless multitudes of a long succession of ages, past, present, and to come, to bring about the perfection and happiness of distant unborn generations? If any individual of the creatures of God have reason eventually to complain that his existence is unacceptable to him, which must in many instances be the case, if death be a state of annihilation, it will argue some degree of imperfection in the wisdom, or power, or goodness of the Deity. 'Tis true we have not proved that he possesses these attributes in perfection, and without such proof we cannot absolutely *demonstrate* the doctrine of a future state. But surely, if we find in the works of nature tokens of a presiding intelligence, whose power and wisdom must evidently far exceed our highest conceptions; whose goodness also is so far manifested, that we only need the supposition of a future state to harmonize it with his other attributes: and if, besides, we find, corresponding with this supposition, intimations of a great design begun, but not completed; this, in all reason, is enough, not indeed to *demonstrate*, for of this

the subject does not admit, but to warrant certainly the *strongest possible presumption*, that our existence will not for ever terminate at death. To say that we are not warranted in believing in a future state, till we have first established the infinite benevolence of God, and that we cannot prove the infinity of the divine benevolence from the acknowledged imperfect manifestations of this attribute which we actually observe, is to require a species of proof of which the subject is altogether in itself incapable. If, as Mr. Hume contends, we cannot reasonably ascribe to the Deity more goodness than what is manifest to actual observation, nothing can ever convince us that his goodness is *infinite*, but a knowledge extensive as the universe, and an understanding capacious as that of the Deity himself. Equally unreasonable is the following objection of the same writer to the inference we have drawn in favour of a future state from the unfinished design which appears manifest in the present. Though it be allowed, he argues, that from a half-finished building, surrounded with heaps of brick and stone and mortar, and all the instruments of masonry, we may both justly infer from the effect, that it was a work of design and contri-

vance; and returning again, from this inferred cause, to infer new additions to the effect, may conclude that the building will soon be finished, and receive all the further improvements which art can bestow upon it; yet from the apparently unfinished designs of nature, we cannot, he contends, justly draw a similar inference, on account of the infinite diversity of the subjects, the *unique* nature of the effect in the latter instance, and the want of all analogy between the minds of men and the mind of the supposed divinity.* With regard to the unique nature of those effects, which are the foundation of our reasoning concerning God and futurity, this, I have already shown, is a circumstance essential to the very nature of the subject. To say that we must have had experience of the works of God exactly in the same way, and to the same extent, in which we have had experience of the works of men, before we can justly found on them any conclusion respecting his designs, is to require a kind of proof of which the subject in its own nature evidently does not admit, unless we should suppose a plurality of deities, with some of whose persons and productions our own observation has made us ac-

* See Hume's Enquiry concerning Human Understanding. Sec. xi.

quainted. And though it be true that the world is an unique effect, and the cause to which we ascribe it equally unique, yet to say that we are altogether deserted by analogy when we come to reason respecting this cause, is surely a gross misrepresentation of the case. Between mind and mind, however widely they may differ in degree of comprehension, there must be some similarity in kind. We cannot, in fact, form any conception of the Deity, but as of a being endowed with intelligence analogous, though infinitely superior, to that of men. If any one maintain that the world is the production of a being respecting whose nature and designs we cannot form the most remote conception, I can only say that his idea, or rather his *no idea*, of a deity, is not that which the phænomena of nature appear to me irresistibly to suggest. The whole tenor of the argument, which deduces the existence of God from the tokens of contrivance exhibited in the works of nature, implies that there is the same analogy between his intelligence and the intelligence of men, as between the contrivances of nature, and the contrivances of man's art. For why do we point out the contrivances of nature, but to show, from their analogy with the contrivances of man, that the

causes of both must be similar in kind, however different in degree? If the argument so far be admitted to be just, it cannot surely be denied that we are competent to form some reasonable presumptions respecting the character and designs of this Supreme Intelligence. And finding in the human condition tokens of a design which appears to want completion in the present state, it is surely not unreasonable to infer, that the work which he has here commenced, he will, in some future unknown scene, continue. It matters not how difficult it may be to conceive in what manner this will be accomplished; for ignorant as we are of the nature of the life that *is*, no wonder we are unable to imagine the mode of that which *shall be*. Nor should we allow our hopes to be discouraged by that complete dissolution of the human frame which death occasions; for surely it is no unreasonable presumption, that the power which originally imparted life, is adequate to renew it, however inconceivable to us may be the mode of that renewal.

It would be vain, however, to affirm that the hope of futurity, as founded on the evidence of nature, is attended with no difficulties. Some

circumstances there certainly are in our condition, which seem at variance with these views of the design of our existence, and which, though they may not admit of a perfectly satisfactory explanation, ought not to pass unnoticed.

If it be true that we are placed in the present state for the purpose of acquiring, from the experience it affords, those qualities of character which will fit us for higher scenes of action and enjoyment in futurity, why, it may be asked, are so many withdrawn from it at the very commencement of their education, long ere they can have profited by the means of discipline here provided for their improvement? To which I answer that, if death be merely a removal from one scene of discipline to another, it is of little moment at what period this removal takes place, since the process of our education which has been here left incomplete, will be resumed and carried on in the future world. Incomplete, indeed, it must be in every case; for to whatever period life may be protracted, room will still be left for further improvement: and its unequal duration in different individuals, though not equally necessary, may be equally reconcileable with divine wisdom on

the ground of its influence on human character. If the uncertainty of our tenure of life answer, as we have reason to think, an important purpose of moral discipline; if it serve to check that over-eagerness in the pursuit of worldly things, and to abate that excessive attachment to them, which would divert our attention from the great object of our existence, namely, the improvement of our character; the reason of premature death in some cases is sufficiently explained; for how could this wise purpose be accomplished, except by making every age alike obnoxious to the awful change? Were we sure of the duration of life to any certain period, we should live without that salutary restraint upon our worldly desires and passions, which now the fear of death imposes upon all. This does not, it must be allowed, sufficiently explain why *greater mortality* should prevail in childhood than in later years; but perhaps this evil is one which human imprudence alone has occasioned, and which human foresight may hereafter obviate, by greater attention to those laws of nature which necessarily limit the increase of population. At any rate, if we are satisfied that a wise purpose is answered by the indiscriminate empire of death, and if this

question be merely about the degree of mortality proper for this or that period of life, on such a subject we may fairly distrust our competence to judge, and acknowledge the difficulty, without allowing that it is sufficient to outweigh the numerous and striking proofs, which other circumstances afford, of man's exalted destiny.

Another objection to the foregoing views may be founded on the fact, that in many instances the experience of life does not appear to afford that improvement, for the sake of which we are supposed to have been sent into the world. Are there not many, it may be said, who, instead of improving as they advance in years, become only more and more confirmed in prejudice and vice? Have we not witnessed repeated instances of men, whose hearts beat high in youth with every generous feeling, becoming gradually soured and corrupted by longer intercourse with the world, till they have sunk at length into what they would once have cordially hated and despised? Nay, does not nature herself appear to contradict our hopes of immortality, when we witness the gradual decay of every mental and corporeal faculty, and

behold the man who was distinguished in his season of vigour by the noblest gifts of intellect, reduced by accumulated years and infirmities to worse than second childishness? These facts are certainly difficult to explain; but be it observed, they are rather to be considered as exceptions to the general law, than as instances or indications of it. However little improvement some may appear to derive from the experience of life, it cannot surely be denied as a general truth, that "multitude of years teach wisdom;" for whence, but from this conviction, arises the respect which is so naturally and universally paid to the aged? Age may damp the ardour of youthful enthusiasm; and long acquaintance with the world, may substitute a wise caution and reserve in the room of that unsuspecting openness and rash generosity which are the amiable characteristics of youth: but this is no deterioration of character: and if in some instances age creates a sordid, selfish, or misanthropic spirit, this is not its general effect, but the result of some peculiar and rarely-occurring circumstances. There are few, I am persuaded, who do not feel themselves more and more deeply impressed, as they advance in life, with the necessity of consulting the wishes

and feelings of others in order to secure their own happiness. The number also of those who outlive their faculties, is small compared with that of those who retain them in vigour to the last; for the great majority of mankind are removed from the stage long ere age has made its inroads upon their minds. Nor do the exceptions themselves present so great a difficulty, if we consider that, though this life is a state of discipline, its discipline is not final and complete. On the contrary, it has been shown, that every future stage of our existence will in all probability be only a continuation of the discipline and progressive improvement of this. If, therefore, our progress in any case seem to be for a while retarded, this retardation can be of little moment, when we have an eternity before us in which to retrieve it.

Other objections may occur to other minds; but these to me appear the most formidable; and I trust it has been shown that they are not such as materially to impair the force of the foregoing reasoning. Difficulties we must expect to find in this, as in every other, inquiry. 'Tis evidently the design of our Creator, that we should see and know but in part. And

when we consider how much our knowledge is confined in point of *space*, how small a part of the boundless universe is submitted to our immediate observation, and how much is hidden from us, which it would be interesting to know, in those countless worlds which dimly glimmer to our view; we cannot wonder that our knowledge should be equally limited with respect to *duration*. The intimations of *future*, are at least as clear as those of *distant*, scenes of being; and who that regards, with due reflection, that grand display of the immensity of creation, which night unfolds to view, can resist the pleasing hope which it suggests, that a time will come when this unbounded field of observation will be more fully opened to our knowledge. "Tis but a part we see and not the whole,"—is a truth of which we are constantly reminded in all our observations of the works of nature; and if it be as true of the *moral*, as it evidently is of the *material* world, it not only allows, but encourages, the hope, that something beyond what we here experience, is reserved for us in the counsels of the Great Supreme. It should satisfy us to reflect, that enough is known for all the purposes of our present existence. This scene of discipline

contains in itself sufficient means and encouragements for the cultivation of character; for the circumstances of our condition are so wisely ordered, that while they lead our hopes to a future state, they afford, as we have seen, abundant inducements to the observance of the rule of duty independently of those hopes. The pursuits and employments of the present world are the means appointed for the promotion of our moral and intellectual improvement, and they appear most wisely adapted to this earliest stage of our advancement. A clearer insight into the secrets of our destiny would only tend, it may be, to defeat the end of our present condition of being, by withdrawing our attention from those pursuits and employments which are its appropriate means of discipline.

Having thus considered the subject of religion in a *speculative* point of view, we are now prepared to enter with advantage upon the *practical* lessons which are founded upon its truths.

SECTION II.

DUTIES RELATING TO THE RELIGIOUS AFFECTIONS.

If there be indeed a God, and if indeed

his designs respecting us are such as the foregoing reasoning leads us to believe; the truth is unquestionably one of the deepest interest to us, and calls most imperatively for a corresponding regulation of the heart and conduct. Hence results the obligation of *Piety*, a virtue which has always deservedly engaged the warmest admiration of mankind, and the highest eulogies of the teachers of duty. Let us consider, then, in detail its several characteristics. In general terms it may be described to consist in a mind habitually alive to those feelings and sentiments which are due to the character of the Supreme Being. These feelings may be enumerated and described under the following heads: Veneration, Gratitude, Confidence, Fear.

1. The pious man, in the first place, is habitually impressed with those feelings of *Veneration*, which the contemplation of the divine perfections is fitted to inspire. In all the works of nature, and in all the events of life, he discerns evidences of the existence, and tokens of the overruling providence of God. To his admiring view the majestic vault of heaven and the varied surface of the earth are full of the Crea-

tor's glory, and bear the manifest impress of his hand. In his listening ears a hymn of praise ascends from hill and dale and grove to Him who peopled them with all their various tribes of happy tenants. He sees the awful name of God inscribed in characters of bright magnificence on the spangled firmament, and as distinctly, though less sublimely, written on every flower's inimitable texture. He discerns the hand of Almighty Power continually employed in upholding and guiding the vast machine of nature; wheeling the orbs of heaven in their stated courses, and leading on the seasons in their unvarying order; diffusing the genial heat and the refreshing shower, and working in all that wondrous process, by which so abundant a supply is unfailingly presented to the various wants of the animated world. These views, be it observed, are not the mere dictate of poetical fancy: the soundest philosophy warrants the belief that the agency of God is perpetually exerted in conducting the operations of nature. However far we may trace the chain of secondary causes, we must come at last to the great prime mover of all; and the operation itself of secondary causes lead us, when fully understood, to the belief that God alone

is even in them the real and immediate agent. The laws of nature, regarded in the light of true philosophy, are only the rules which he has prescribed to himself, and to which he invariably adheres, in exhibiting the objects of knowledge and of action to the senses of his living creatures.

2. The next, which we shall mention, of the sentiments of piety, is *Gratitude.* And surely if ever this feeling was justly due, it is due by the strongest possible claim to the Author of our being. If we believe that he has bestowed existence on us for the sole purpose of imparting happiness, and that his design in placing us in our own present state, is to form our minds, by a process of discipline, for future scenes of ever-advancing knowledge, and ever-increasing means and capacities of enjoyment, we must feel the boon of life to be an inestimable blessing, for which we cannot be too warmly thankful. And even without referring to these extended views, the man whose heart is well disposed, will find in the existing scene alone abundant cause for pious gratitude. The ordinary comforts and daily enjoyments of life appear to him as tokens of divine beneficence;

and food, raiment, habitation, health, peace, and friends, call forth from his heart the continual tribute of devout thanksgiving. He waits not, then, for signal and distinguished favours as alone entitled to his gratitude, nor suffers those few ills to which he may be subject, to exclude from his view the far more numerous comforts which are still allowed him to enjoy. But regarding his condition in the most favourable light, not aggravating its evils, and not overlooking its advantages, he not merely acquiesces in the lot assigned him, but is grateful for it, notwithstanding all its grievances. Contentment, thus elevated and ennobled by religious principle, constitutes that exalted feeling of pious gratitude, than which no better tribute of homage can be rendered by man to the Great Supreme.

To be resigned when ills betide,
Patient when favours are denied,
And pleased with favours given;
This is the wise, the virtuous part,
This is that incense of the heart,
Whose fragrance reaches heaven.

3. The third affection included under the general name of piety, is that of *Trust*, *Confi-*

dence, or *Resignation.* That nothing happens by Chance, but that all events are appointed by the express will of Heaven, and appointed for the best of purposes, is a doctrine equally dear to piety, and consistent with the most enlightened views of the mode in which the divine government is exercised over the world. Whether we imagine that the Deity has communicated to matter certain powers of independent action, and having set the machinery of the world in motion, leaves it to perform its prescribed task without any further interference on his part; or prefer the belief, which seems indeed most reasonable, that his agency is constantly employed in upholding the world which he has made, and directing every movement of nature; in either case it is equally reasonable to believe, that whatever happens, happens by his decree. For though we find by uniform experience, that he never interferes to suspend or counteract the established laws of nature, or never, in other words, departs from his prescribed rules of operation; still we cannot but suppose, that, in framing those laws, or prescribing to himself those rules, he clearly foresaw all their minutest consequences; and if so, there is no event, however trivial and insignificant, which we may

not consider as proceeding from his express appointment. Nor is this statement altered in its truth, when the events in question are produced by the instrumentality of living agents. For the empire of the Deity extends over mind not less than over matter, and the volitions of every living agent, so far from being fortuitous and uncertain, take place by laws as fixed and invariable as those which govern the operations of external nature. These volitions, therefore, may be not less the objects of the divine foreknowledge than the changes of the material world; and whatever, therefore, happens to us by the agency of others, happens not less by his appointment, than if the laws of the material world had been alone employed. Admitting this, that all events which may befall us proceed from divine appointment, we cannot but advance to the more delightful belief, that all is appointed for the best. For as we cannot imagine how any motive but that of benevolence should actuate a being of such resistless power, so neither can we suppose that a being of such all-comprehending knowledge does not see the most effectual means of accomplishing his benevolent designs. It is most reasonable, therefore, to presume, though it is impossible,

from the very nature of the subject, to prove, that the Deity has chosen that system of nature, or fixed that order of events, which includes the greatest possible amount of happiness. To cherish and to act upon this belief, constitutes one important characteristic of piety, and it is a conviction which furnishes the best of all supports under the pressure of the ills of life. Anxiety about the future, and despondence or impatience under the present suffering, are feelings which morality, independently of religion, leads us, as we have seen, most strongly to condemn. But add these delightful views of religion, and they acquire a character of greater folly and far more serious criminality. The pious man abhors them as arguing a distrust of the goodness, or a spirit of rebellion against the will of his heavenly Father. Believing that he is placed at the disposal of One who regards him with all a parent's tenderness, and who will order his lot in all things for the best, he feels it at once his pleasure and his duty to dismiss from his breast all anxious fears about the future. And whatever afflictions betide, he receives them as the discipline of paternal regard, inflicted to promote his highest good. Not always, indeed, may this end be apparent; but

he still trusts that such is the intent of Heaven in even its darkest appointments. He knows too well his own blindness and ignorance, to dare to question the divine benignity or wisdom, because all is not clear to his short-sighted view.

Let it not be supposed, however, that this branch of piety implies or warrants the least neglect of exertion. Instances, indeed, are not uncommon, of such perversion of the duty of resignation; and some apparently pious characters may be found, who seem to think that the care of Providence supersedes the necessity of any care or effort of their own. But this is surely a most mistaken piety, if it be not rather the result of indolence, deluding or excusing itself under the name of piety. The ends of Providence we uniformly find to be accomplished by the intervention of means. Nothing takes place by arbitrary appointment: nothing interrupts the established order of nature, or dissolves the invariable connexion of cause and effect. Causes or means, it is true, are in many cases placed far beyond our knowledge and control; but wherever our fortune is within our power, wherever our own determinations and

exertions are the means connected in the order of nature with the attainment of certain ends, it is folly to expect that those ends will be attained without the intervention of the ordinary means; for this, in fact, would be expecting no less than miraculous interference in our behalf. Reliance upon Providence is not called for;—there is no place for the exercise of the duty, but with respect to those events or circumstances, in the production of which we have no concern. To neglect the means committed to our hands of procuring what is good, or avoiding what is evil; to trust that we shall be fed or clothed by the care of Heaven, without any care or exertion of our own; would be to counteract altogether the manifest design of God, as evinced in the constitution of the world in which we dwell. That design is evidently to lead us to improvement, by leading us to exertion; to make us in some measure the architects of our own fortune; to make us not merely the passive recipients of his bounty, but the voluntary, intelligent, and active agents in working out our own and one another's happiness, by the means which are placed before us. The man of rational piety, therefore, sensible that such is the design of Heaven, considers it not

less the part of piety, to leave no means unemployed of guarding against evil, as to be prepared to submit with resignation to those evils which he cannot prevent. And even in the exercise of resignation under calamities which have actually befallen him, he is mindful to consider how far they admit of being repaired or alleviated by his own exertions, and thinks it not sufficient to abstain from impious repinings, unless he also contend against misfortune by instantly seeking and vigorously applying whatever means of reparation may remain.

4. The next of the affections due to God, and included with the foregoing under the general name of piety, is that which I have expressed by the term *Fear*. The feeling, however, which is here meant, must not be understood as at all approaching to the abject terror of superstition, which pictures the divine Being like some earthly despot, and trembles before him with the constant dread of his capricious purposes or implacable resentment. The true and rational fear of God is no such pitiable and degrading feeling. It consists simply in habitually entertaining a solemn sense of the presence and inspection of the Deity, and in acting habi-

tually from a regard to his will, as intimated by the dictates of an enlightened conscience. It is nothing else, in short, than the moral principle supported and improved by religious views. That restraint which arises in the minds of the *morally* virtuous from the imaginary presence of human spectators, becomes, in the minds of the *religiously* virtuous, no mere fiction of the fancy, but the strong and deliberate conviction of the actual presence of a far more penetrating and formidable Observer. That incitement to excellence, or support under censure, which the former derive from the fancied judgment of the wise and good, or the anticipated applause of posterity, the latter derive, in a far more effectual degree, from the firm assurance that their hearts are already known, and their conduct perpetually witnessed, by One whose judgment is of infinitely greater consequence. The voice of conscience, to the former, is the voice of reason; to the latter, it is the voice of God. When humbled with the consciousness of having offended, the pious experience a more poignant remorse from the thought that they have acted in disregard of their obligations to a benefactor whose goodness they can never repay. When distressed by the false

imputations or unmerited censure of men, the testimony of their conscience derives new sweetness, and augmented power of consolation, from the belief that it is the pledge and assurance of divine approbation.

There is yet another feeling, which though not so immediately suggested by the term piety according to its common usage, is yet a necessary part of the same disposition of mind; I mean that feeling which is founded on the expectation of futurity, and which may be designated by the name of *heavenly-mindedness.* This, I say, is a necessary part of piety, because the belief of a future state is a necessary consequence of the belief of a Deity, or at least of such views of the nature of the Deity, as alone are calculated to inspire the feelings of piety; and because to pay a regard to his will, must necessarily lead us to consider his future designs respecting us, and to act conformably with them. If it be indeed true that the present life is a state of discipline designed to train us to moral and intellectual excellence, and so to prepare us for future more exalted scenes of being, where the career of improvement which we have here commenced will be continued

and prolonged to endless ages, it is evidently our duty to keep this object of our existence continually in view, and to regard the present scene and all its objects, mindful of their transitory nature and subordinate importance. To become, indeed, altogether indifferent about the things of this world, and to fix our hopes and affections exclusively on the future, is neither practicable nor desirable. The present world is our appointed theatre of active exertion. Its pursuits and employments are the means most wisely chosen for promoting our moral and intellectual improvement. We cannot neglect or forget them even if we would; they will press upon our attention; they will engross in a large degree our thoughts and passions; and it is right they should. That utter contempt for sublunary things, which has so often, in the inconsiderate warmth of declamation, been held up as the perfection of human virtue, and which monks and hermits have attempted to reduce to practice, must be acknowledged, on more mature deliberation, to be at once visionary and useless; and he who should succeed in attaining it, if to attain it were possible, would be no longer a fit inhabitant of this world, since he would be beyond the reach of

that improvement which its employments and pursuits were intended to afford. To make the improvement of character the main object of life, to moderate our eagerness in pursuit of worldly advantages, to be not unduly elated with prosperity, and not unduly dejected under adverse circumstances;—this is all that can reasonably be required as the effect of living with eternity in view.

From this review of the principal characteristics of piety it will be easy to distinguish the genuine virtue from all the forms of spurious or pretended piety, and at the same time to perceive how close and inseparable is the connexion between true religion and true morality. There is an apparent piety which exerts no salutary influence upon the conduct, if its influence be not sometimes positively evil; and there is a certain kind or degree of virtue which may exist independently of religious views. But I shall endeavour to show that the former is not true piety; and that the latter is not virtue of the best kind, nor entitled to the highest degree of esteem or confidence.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, in the first

place, that true piety is not that which consists merely in an *assiduous and regular performance of the outward exercises of devotion.* These exercises, it is true, constitute a part, and no unimportant part, of the duties of piety, because they are necessary, as will be shown hereafter, to keep alive those feelings of the heart in which its essence consists. But as they are only the means designed to produce and maintain internal dispositions of piety, they are evidently no farther useful or valuable, than as they serve to accomplish this object. To rest satisfied, therefore, with merely performing the formal outward acts of religious worship, without being habitually impressed with the feelings of piety, is to substitute the means for the end, the shadow for the substance.

It is equally apparent from the foregoing observations that true piety does not consist in *extravagant emotion.* Persons of warm temperament and lively imagination, whenever they open their hearts to the influences of religion, embrace it with peculiar ardour, and occasionally experience ectasies of devotion, of which plain and sober minds are altogether incapable. But these rapturous feelings can never, by any

effort, be long sustained. For a moment the soul is rapt in a transport of devout enthusiasm, or softened with emotions which seem to afford a foretaste of heavenly bliss; but the dull realities of life soon break the spell, dissolve the pleasing dream, and bring back all the ordinary thoughts and grovelling cares of human nature.

> —— soon, alas! the holy calm is broke,
> The soul submits to wear her wonted yoke,
> With shackled pinions strives to soar in vain,
> And mingles with the dross of earth again.

Feelings of this very evanescent nature, though often the foundation, in those who experience them, of a fond conceit of their own peculiar sanctity, are no evidence of real worth, since, like the emotions of sympathy, they are merely the result of constitutional tendencies, and are altogether unknown to many persons of indisputable excellence.* The same constitution of mind, in cases where the restraint of good sense and cultivated reason is wanting, is capable of leading to the grossest fanaticism. For it not unfrequently happens, that under the influence of these ardent emotions, ignorant and

* Note S.

misguided persons imagine themselves admitted to peculiar intimacy with God, mistake the ravings of their heated minds for the dictates of his spirit, and filled, as they suppose, with holy fervour, address the Majesty of Heaven in language of gross familiarity suitable only to the intercourse or friendship of mortals with their fellow mortals. It is not true religion or enlightened piety which evinces itself in these extravagancies, but self-love or party spirit assuming the disguise of piety: for what is that idea of God, which exists in the minds of fanatics, and excites such wild emotions and frantic conduct, but a fiction of their own disordered imaginations, invested only with such attributes as their narrow intellects are capable of conceiving, and endowed with their own prejudices, their own intolerance, their own party spirit or sectarian zeal. No wonder that a God so thought of should be the idol of their hearts, when Self is the real object which they adore and love under that hallowed name. And here I would observe, and the remark cannot be too carefully borne in mind, that without an enlightened judgment, and a candid conscience, even religion will be liable to the grossest perversions, and will serve only to confirm us in

error. Conscience has been often termed the vicegerent of God; and true it is, that what we believe to be the dictate of conscience, we believe also to be the will of God; for we have no other means of judging of his sentiments, than by consulting the deliberate judgments of our own understandings. But as the consciences of men too often speak flatteringly of themselves, and their judgments are frequently perverted by unjust prejudices against others, so they are apt to make the Deity a partner in their own delusions and their party feelings;—his imagined voice confirms the flattering dictates of their self-complacence, approves whatever they approve, and condemns as they condemn.* Such is the real source of the intemperate zeal and extravagant emotions of fanatics: the object of their devotion is the idol of a heated imagination, invested with the prejudices and endowed with the character of its worshippers. True piety can never exist but in minds enlightened, and exempt from all contracted and erroneous notions of the divine nature and government. It is true, the most enlightened mind can form no *adequate* conceptions of the Deity; yet the

* Note T.

more enlarged our conceptions of him become, the more we shall be convinced that special interference, and human passions, and partial regards, the belief of which is the chief support of fanaticism, are altogether remote from his administration and character. We shall learn to contemplate his agency solely in that invariable order of nature, in that established connexion of cause and effect, by which alone he manifests himself to us, and all personal feelings, all ardent emotions of attachment, such as those of which our fellow creatures are the objects, will appear altogether unsuitable to his august and hidden nature.

True piety, moreover, is not *ostentatious.* Far different from the spurious devotion of the Pharisees, who prayed often in the synagogues and at the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men, true piety is a silent, modest, unobtrusive principle, dwelling in the inmost recesses of the heart. It shuns with abhorrence the least appearance of parade. No loud expressions of pious sentiment, no public display of devotional gestures, evince its existence; its only expression consists in those silent aspirations which are breathed in the still-

ness and secrecy of the soul, audible only to Him who searcheth the heart.

Equally remote, in the last place, from genuine piety, is *spiritual pride.* This odious disposition has not unfrequently been laid to the charge of piety; but the charge is just with respect only to those spurious forms of piety, the falsehood of which I have attempted to expose. The superstitious observer of the mere outward forms of devotion, who rates the merit of his character according to the frequency of his prayers; the enthusiast whose extravagant emotions and visionary fancies persuade him that he is already marked down as the favourite of heaven;—these are the characters who trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others, and who alone are capable of addressing a fellow mortal with the proud injunction, "Stand off, for I am holier than thou." To such arrogant feelings the truly pious man is altogether a stranger. There indeed is no quality which more peculiarly marks his character, or more necessarily results from his habitual reflections, than humility. That constant sense which he entertains of the presence and inspection of the divine Being, utterly ex-

cludes from his mind every feeling of pride. Accustomed to estimate his character, not by a comparison with his fellow men, but by a reference to the judgment of Omniscience, he cannot conceal from himself his manifold frailties. And however high he may deservedly rank in the estimation of his fellow men, he is fully sensible, that, in the sight of God, he cannot stand entirely blameless. No feeling, therefore, can appear more inadmissible or groundless in his eyes than that of spiritual pride.

In a word, as piety is that disposition of the heart towards God, which will lead us habitually to regard his will, and as his will, proceeding from a desire to promote the welfare of his creatures, must ever be understood to coincide with the principles of enlightened morality, it is undeniable that nothing can deserve the name of piety which is not productive of a life of virtue.

And now another important question here claims our attention. Admitting that true piety cannot exist independently of moral virtue, is the converse of this equally true, that moral

virtue cannot exist independently of piety? Or in other words, is it possible for one who disbelieves the existence of God, or who, though believing in his existence, thinks little of him, and is altogether a stranger to those feelings which constitute piety;—is it possible for such a person to attain those other excellences of character which are merely moral?—It cannot, I think, be denied, that a certain kind of virtue may be found in many instances where religious feelings are altogether wanting. From motives of prudence, from a regard to reputation, or from those tastes and habits which education has implanted, a man who is insensible to the feelings of piety, may avoid all gross acts of immorality, and exhibit that general correctness and propriety of behaviour, which will render him respectable in the eyes of the world. I would not by any means say that such a character is entitled to no degree of approbation. But this may safely be asserted, that, without some higher principle of conduct, he is incapable of attaining the higher excellences of character. Mere prudence alone will never prompt to the more exalted and disinterested exertions of benevolence; but on the contrary will rather tend to withhold us from them, whenever they

are such as threaten us with obloquy, danger, or serious pecuniary loss. A regard to reputation, if that be our only motive, will not operate in all times and places with uniform influence in favour of virtue. It may render us careful and circumspect in our conduct before the world, but it will impose no restraint upon us in those situations in which we are withdrawn from the observation of men. Nor will it be sufficient in any situation to regulate those secret thoughts, and those internal sentiments and feelings, which are known only to God and to ourselves. It must evidently be some higher and more disinterested principle than prudence, which will lead us to make important sacrifices for the public good; and some principle of more uniform influence, which will render us as much averse to do wrong in the deepest shades of secrecy as in the public view;—as observant of our inmost thoughts, as of our outward and visible demeanour. It may, indeed, be supposed, from what was said respecting the history and formation of our moral sentiments, that such a principle as this may be created independently of religious views by the natural progress of the love of esteem. But though it is undoubtedly the natural tendency of this disposition to grow

into the love of whatever is worthy of esteem, and thus to render virtue an object of desire and attachment independently of human observation, yet it may well be questioned, whether it be likely to attain this state of improvement, or whether at least its influence in this state can be much relied on in cases of strong temptation, without the aid of those motives which religion only can supply. For let an individual have been ever so carefully and judiciously educated, let him have been taught, from his earliest youth, by precept and example both, to admire and love whatever is excellent, and thus let his moral tastes and habits be ever so correctly formed and deeply fixed; yet if he embrace the cheerless doctrine that "this universal frame is without a mind," or, what amounts to much the same, that the present is the only destined scene of man's existence, this alone will be sufficient to corrupt his taste, and counteract his habits. The withering influence of such a creed will blight each opening flower of virtue, and leave his mind as destitute of moral beauty, as the world would appear in that case destitute of fitness for any worthy or intelligible end. "The exclusion of a Supreme Being and a superintending Providence," observes an elo-

quent living writer, "tends directly to the destruction of moral taste. It robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and perfect goodness for which we are formed, and which kindles such unspeakable rapture in the soul, finding in the regions of scepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an Almighty Parent, in a world which leads the devout mind step by step to the contemplation of the first fair and the first good, the sceptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder."* Whatever may be the force of virtuous habit, in point of reason there must be a considerable difference between the moral principles of him who rejects, and of him who believes the doctrines of religion. *The improvement of character can never be considered as an object of supreme importance by one who looks for no existence beyond the present life.* His main object, according to the most deliberate dictates of reason, should be to secure the most abundant means of present enjoyment. And

* Note U.

upon this principle he would certainly be justified in considering wealth and reputation as the highest objects of desire. If ever these two objects should interfere with one another, there might be a conflict in his mind whether interest or honour should have the preference. But if at any time a case of duty should arise requiring the sacrifice of both, his reason might well dispute the obligation, and his virtuous tastes and principles, however carefully cherished and deeply implanted, would prove but feeble antagonists against those powerful passions, the love of wealth and honour, thus aided and abetted by the voice of reason. That important consideration, suggested by a judicious writer, and before adverted to, which urges that many things should be done or abstained from solely for the sake of habit, a consideration which in many instances constitutes the sole argument which can be brought for the enforcement of duty, evidently derives its chief force from the prospect of a future life, and cannot be expected to have much influence upon one who, because he regards not this world as a state of preparation for another, cannot regard the improvement of character as an object of paramount importance. Wanting thus its best support, the princi-

ple of duty, however improved, so far as education and habit are capable of improving it, must necessarily fall far short of that predominance to which it is entitled. But in supposing a high improvement of the moral tastes and principles, we have supposed what evidently is not the case with the great majority of mankind. The great majority of mankind are little swayed by any such elevated feeling as the love of virtue for its own sake. Interest is the all-pervading motive which chiefly actuates them, checked, indeed, in most, by some regard to character, but often owning no restraint but the gross regard to personal security. Take away from them the expectation of a future life; remove the awful sanctions which the rule of duty derives from the belief of a moral government exercised over the world and extending its administration beyond the confines of the present scene; and though you leave them still the same restraints to which alone they have been accustomed to submit, you yet afford them a full justification in their own eyes for not submitting to any higher restraint: you give them reason to laugh at every argument which appeals in favour of virtue to any higher feelings than their own; and afford them ground for

despising an over-scrupulous conscience, as a troublesome impediment in the prosecution of their interested schemes. It may be true, as we formerly endeavoured to show, that virtue even in the present life is most conducive to happiness; but the proof of this, so far as it relates to the higher degrees of virtue, depends upon a comparison of tastes, and rests altogether upon the assertion, that benevolent dispositions and a refined sense of right and wrong afford more exquisite, pure, and lasting enjoyments, than any which can arise from the indulgence of selfish or low propensities. Now, however true this assertion may be, it is obvious that its truth can be known by experience only; and they whose experience has never informed them of this superior kind of happiness, will certainly dispute the assertion, alleging, with some plausibility, the common maxim so often appealed to in cases of disagreement about matters of taste. At any rate they may not unreasonably contend that, as life is short, and they cannot at once assume a different character, it is the part of wisdom *in them*, on the supposition that the present is the only destined scene of our existence, to take up with the inferior enjoyments of which only they are ca-

pable, rather than undertake the arduous task of acquiring a taste for enjoyments of a higher kind. It may be true, that a high sense of integrity constitutes in itself a more eligible state of mind, than principles somewhat loose and accommodating. But if a man's character be such that he feels no uneasiness under the consciousness of acting a deceitful part, by what argument, except that derived from a future life, are we likely to persuade him to make any sacrifice of worldly emolument to truth? It may be true, that he who tastes of pleasure in moderation, and devotes himself to honourable and useful pursuits, experiences a happiness far more refined and durable, and secures himself more effectually from various formidable evils, than he who gives a loose to sensual indulgences. But if we cannot appeal to a future life to show the paramount importance of moral improvement, how shall we contend with the abandoned voluptuary, who avows that a life of gaiety, though short, is preferable in his judgment to a life protracted by dull sobriety to a longer term? It may be true, that a mind of fortitude, which manfully bears up against misfortune, is the best qualification for passing through this chequered and uncertain

scene. But suppose an individual already weary of life, or placed in circumstances which not only exclude the least hope of future enjoyment, but hold out the certain prospect of lingering decay or long-protracted pain, and if religion afford not its unanswerable reasons for resignation, how can we say that he acts wrongly or unwisely in seeking a refuge from his woes in self-inflicted death? It is evident, then, that the sanctions of religion afford an important and indispensable support to the precepts of morality; and though mankind, however destitute of religious belief, can never be supposed entirely destitute of moral principle, since it is impossible for society to subsist at all without some rule of mutual restraint; yet, unsanctioned by religion, this rule must remain extremely defective as a guide of conduct, and want the best of all securities for its observance. Upon the whole we may observe that the study of morality leads so immediately to the study of religion, it furnishes of itself such convincing arguments for the existence, such exalted views of the character of God, and such strong intimations of a future state, that it may well be questioned whether any one ever did, or ever can, make any considerable advancement in

virtue, without being led by that very means to entertain those views and feelings which constitute piety. This at least is certain, that moral principles erected on the basis of religion are both more firmly established, and more likely to be complete and free from error, than those which are formed independently of religious views. It is from this conviction that mankind have ever manifested a strong attachment to religion, a lively sense of its value, and a watchful jealousy with regard to its doctrines. They have ever regarded with abhorrence and resisted with vehemence every attempt to remove or weaken its sanctions, and have bowed with reverence to those whose office it has been to enforce its truths or minister its ordinances. The history, indeed, of religion presents a mournful picture of human imbecility. The absurd doctrines, the frivolous ceremonies, the childish superstitions, the fierce spirit of intolerance and faction, the bloody persecutions and desolating wars, which in various ages and countries have been sanctioned under its sacred and most abused name, are such as we can hardly review without blushing for human nature, and turning with disgust from the sickening detail. But when we consider from what

source it is that these follies and crimes have derived their sacredness;—that it is only from their alliance with those moral principles which must ever be dear to the human heart; our wonder and disgust will be in a great measure removed, and the character of our race will be redeemed in our opinion. It is their regard for virtue, their conviction of its essential importance to the peace and order of society, their desire to guard it by every possible sanction, to form its rules by a higher standard, and to rest its obligations on higher ground, than that of mere temporary interest or expedience, which has rendered religion, and *every thing connected with religion*, venerable in their eyes. It is this powerful association which has given to absurd dogmas and paltry superstitions a hold upon the minds of men, which they could never otherwise have acquired. It is this very jealousy for virtue, which has partly operated in rendering them so prone to quarrel with one another upon points of no imaginable importance in the eye of more enlightened reason. These sad perversions of the moral and religious feelings of men have supplied to the enemies of all religion an abundant subject of invective and derision. But the truly philosophi-

cal mind, contemplating the facts in question with more liberal and enlarged views, will rather discern in them a striking evidence of the truth of those religious principles which nature has so deeply implanted in the human mind. If the moral constitution of men be such as to lead them almost necessarily to the belief of a moral government exercised over the world, it is surely not unreasonable to interpret this tendency as an intimation, from the Author of our being, of his existence and designs. And if the most distant connexion with religion has been sufficient to give a character of sanctity and importance to what would otherwise have been regarded with contempt, it is only a proof how deeply the principles of religion are implanted in the mind of man. But I cannot better enforce this sentiment, than in the words of an elegant living writer in the following valuable passage, from the perusal of which, though oft repeated, I never rise without being cheered, improved, and satisfied. "Should not the melancholy histories, which have been exhibited, of the follies and caprices of superstition, direct our attention to those sacred and indelible characters on the human mind, which all these perversions of reason are unable to obliterate; like

that image of himself, which Phidias wished to perpetuate, by stamping it so deeply on the buckler of his Minerva, 'ut nemo delere posset aut divellere, qui totam statuam non imminueret.' In truth the more strange the contradictions and the more ludicrous the ceremonies to which the pride of human reason has thus been reconciled, the stronger is our evidence that religion has a foundation in the nature of man. When the greatest of modern philosophers declares, that 'he would rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind,'* he has expressed the same feeling, which, in all ages and nations, has led good men, unaccustomed to reasoning, to an implicit faith in the creed of their infancy;—a feeling which affords an evidence of the existence of a Deity, incomparably more striking, than if, unmixed with error and undebased by superstition, this most important of all principles had commanded the universal assent of mankind. Where are the other truths in the whole circle of the sciences, which are so essential to human happiness, as to procure an easy access, not only for themselves, but for whatever opinions

* Lord Bacon, in his Essays.

may happen to be blended with them? Where are the truths so venerable and commanding, as to impart their own sublimity to every trifling memorial which recalls them to our remembrance; to bestow solemnity and elevation on every mode of expression by which they are conveyed; and which, in whatever scene they have habitually occupied the thoughts, consecrate every object which it presents to our senses, and the very ground we have been accustomed to tread? To attempt to weaken the authority of such impressions, by a detail of the endless variety of forms, which they derive from casual associations, is surely an employment unsuitable to the dignity of philosophy. To the vulgar it may be amusing, in this, as in other instances, to indulge their wonder at what is new or uncommon; but to the philosopher it belongs to perceive, under all these various disguises, the workings of the same common nature; and in the superstitions of Egypt, no less than in the lofty visions of Plato, to recognize the existence of those moral ties which unite the heart of man to the Author of his being."*

* Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind. Ch. v. pt. ii. s. i.

BOOK III.

DISCIPLINARY MORALITY.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

HAVING now gone through the detail of human duty, by pointing out first the general objects of action and restraint, and by showing next the particular government of all our propensities and affections in succession, I proceed to the last great branch of moral inquiry, the object of which is to ascertain by what means our observance of these precepts may be most effectually accomplished. The detail and enforcement of our duties constitutes not the whole object of Moral Science, since it is not of itself sufficient for the proper regulation of our conduct. Experience tells us that the *knowledge* of duty by no means necessarily leads to the *practice* of it.—"Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor,"—is a confession which will find a mournful echo in every human breast.

The feebleness of our best resolutions, the inefficacy of our virtuous efforts, the perverse tendency of our minds to yield to the force of temptation in opposition to our better judgment, is what all who are in any degree solicitous about the right government of their conduct, continually experience and lament. We see and we approve the right, but follow after that which is wrong. Often do we acknowledge our errors; often do we accuse our folly in yielding to temptation, often do we firmly resolve no more to wander from the path of duty; but, alas, the moment of trial no sooner returns, than our good purposes, which seemed so steadfast, vanish as if they had never been, and again we weakly yield to the same allurements, which have misled and betrayed us already a thousand times. It is surely of great importance to investigate the causes of this instability, and the means, if there be any, by which we may remedy it, and learn to *practise* that which we *approve*. This is a branch of inquiry which evidently belongs to, and merits an important place in ethical science, though few philosophical moralists have distinctly attended to it.

CHAP. I.

OF THE SOURCES OF HUMAN MISCONDUCT.

The remedy for every evil is best ascertained by an investigation of its cause. For this reason, we propose, in the first place, to inquire into the *sources of human misconduct.*

It is the fatal consequence, some would say, of that corrupt nature which all mankind inherit from their first parents; the result of that original inborn taint of sin, which renders us naturally prone to evil and averse from good. Without entering into a full discussion of this melancholy and revolting doctrine, it may be sufficient here to observe, that our tendency to vice is not in itself a sign of the *corruption*, but merely of the *imperfection* of our nature. And this assertion is, I think, fully warranted by the fact, that, though we so lamentably fall short of what we ought to be, yet we do at least *esteem* virtue and *wish* to practise it; whereas, were we really in that corrupt and depraved state which is by some supposed, we should not merely find the practice of virtue thus difficult,

but the very admiration of it, the very wish to practise it, would be altogether foreign to our hearts.

Others, again, would say, that human misconduct is only to be accounted for in this way, —that God has made us free agents; that he has set before us for our choice virtue with its rewards and vice with its punishments; and that having thus the liberty of choice, we sometimes make an ill use of this liberty, and perversely choose evil instead of good. If by *free* agents be meant *voluntary* agents, there is nothing in this doctrine inconsistent with truth. But it is not by any means a satisfactory answer to our inquiry; since it assigns in fact *no cause at all* for human misconduct, but represents the actions of men as altogether arbitrary and unaccountable. And were this all that could be said upon the subject, it would at once preclude all further discussion, and leave no hope of discovering a remedy for an evil so fortuitous, or of operating by any means of discipline or persuasion upon the minds of beings so unaccountably capricious. The sole spring of human actions is the desire of happiness, and men *cannot but* choose what they imagine to be

conducive to their happiness. They may be, and often are, mistaken in the *means ;* but it is impossible they should knowingly pursue a different *end.* We are not creatures of such corrupt and perverse nature as to choose guilt for its own sake ; nor is it possible that we should prefer that course of conduct which is most hostile to our happiness, *while fully sensible that such is its tendency.* Some facts, indeed, there are, which seem at variance with this doctrine; but these will be more fully considered, when we come to treat of the influence of temptation.

The sources of human misconduct may all be included under the following heads:—1. Ignorance of duty. 2. The influence of passion or immediate temptation. 3. The influence of habit. 4. Self deception. 5. Individual character.

SECTION I.

OF IGNORANCE OF DUTY.

The first particular source of human misconduct is Ignorance of Duty, arising either from the want of instruction, or from such in-

struction as tends only to mislead. The most obvious instance of error arising from this cause is found in children, who are evidently incapable of acting according to moral rules, because they have as yet acquired no notion of the distinction between right and wrong. Desire of immediate pleasure, and aversion from present pain, are their sole original incitements to action, and the very idea of imposing restraint upon any of their passions or desires enters not into their minds, till the painful lesson is taught them by the injunctions of others. These injunctions form their first restraining principle. Of any higher principle of restraint they must necessarily remain ignorant, till further instruction, more enlarged experience, or more mature reflection, has made them acquainted with moral rules, and given them more enlightened views of the nature and means of happiness.

The same ignorance of duty may be remarked in those whose moral education has been totally neglected, or so conducted as to foster vicious habits. Such persons cannot be expected to evince the same acute perception of right and wrong, which we find in those,

whose minds, from earliest childhood, have been judiciously cultivated, and carefully imbued with the best principles. A youth, for instance, who has been constantly taught and encouraged by his parents to steal, cannot be supposed to have a proper sense of the criminality of that practice. He may know, indeed, that it is a practice which exposes him to the danger of public punishment: but he sees no other reason for avoiding it; and this danger, if it be not very imminent, is amply compensated, in his estimation, by the expected advantages of success. Possibly he may even regard it as a point of honour, and a proof of laudable heroism, to despise all thought of danger. The principle of moral restraint is founded, as we have already shown, on the regard which we naturally feel for the sentiments of our fellow men respecting us; but with respect to the tendency and value of this principle, all depends upon what conceptions we form of the sentiments of others, or upon what selection we make of the class of men whose sentiments are to be the object of regard. He whose earliest recollections of applause are connected with the successful practice of dishonest arts, and in whose mind reproach and shame among those

whose sentiments he is habituated to regard, are associated with scruples or fears about such conduct, cannot be expected to entertain a proper sense of the obligations of integrity. The most obvious truths of morality, which are to others so plain as to appear intuitive, scarcely, it is probable, occur at all to the minds of those who have thus been trained in wickedness. However plain to us may appear the iniquity of a robber's life, to the wandering Arab it cannot be supposed to appear in the same light. He may, indeed, admit the obligations of justice so far as regards the people of his own tribe; but the rest of mankind he doubtless regards as lawful prey, whom it is rather a merit than a sin to spoil. However obvious to us may be those dictates of morality which forbid the unrestrained indulgence of revenge, we cannot wonder that the duty of forgiveness is altogether unknown to the untutored savage, who has been taught by the example and sentiments of all around him to regard it as a mark of pusillanimity to suffer wrong without attempting to retaliate. Except in the case of children, instances can rarely be found of *total* ignorance of duty; for even the degraded savage and the lawless robber

acknowledge some principle of restraint with regard at least to their own immediate associates. But *partial* ignorance of duty, arising from something erroneous in the moral principles of the community with which we are connected, is extremely common, and indeed almost universal. It has been heretofore remarked, that the moral sentiments of men, though agreeing in the main, are not entirely uniform; and in different ages, nations, and classes, different notions of moral duty will be found to prevail, some of which, it is obvious, must be erroneous. The causes of this diversity I shall not attempt, nor does my subject require me, to explain. I mention it only for the purpose of observing, that, as individuals are naturally prone to conform to and adopt the moral principles which happen to prevail in the community or society with which they are connected, they thus are liable to form erroneous views of moral duty. Hence it is that a Mahometan feels no scruple in having a plurality of wives; that a Chinese or Hindoo regards without abhorrence the practice of infanticide; that the West Indian planter considers negroes as designed by nature for a state of slavery; and that a Roman regarded suicide

as an action not only allowable, but heroic. But besides these national peculiarities of moral sentiment, it may be observed that almost every rank or class of men has a system of morality in some respects peculiar to itself, the same virtues and the same vices being regarded with different degrees of approbation or censure by different classes. The man of fashion, for instance, would resent with the warmest indignation the imputation of a lie; while he regards unbounded extravagance, unprincipled licentiousness, and ruinous habits of gaming, as only pardonable foibles. The soldier would rather perish than incur the reproach of cowardice; but considers profaneness, intemperance, and loose gallantry as no material blemish to his character. And though the same irregularities, which are considered in these instances almost allowable, would shock the feelings and ruin the reputation of the sober tradesman, yet he, it may be, feels no scruple in practising, according to the prevalent custom of his class, certain artifices of trade by no means consistent with strict integrity. These may fairly be considered as instances of the ignorance of duty, since the moral sentiments of individuals are naturally formed according

to the maxims and principles which are in vogue in the society or class with which they are connected.

To the same source we may also ascribe those errors of conduct which arise from political or religious prejudices. How grossly the moral sense is often perverted by the zeal of party; how much injustice may be ignorantly committed by well-meaning men from the infatuating influence of narrow-minded bigotry, daily experience will abundantly testify. And history informs us of numberless enormities perpetrated, under the influence of religious prejudice, by men, who doubtless thought that they were serving the cause of God by persecuting those whom they ignorantly, but sincerely, deemed his enemies.

But ignorance of duty may exist even without any positive error in our religious creed or moral system. Our moral principles may be correct so far as they go, and yet may be defective with respect to their comprehensiveness. We may not, I mean, be aware of the *full extent of our duty*;—we may not have fully set before our view all our opportunities of useful-

ness, all our capabilities of improvement; and hence, though we may avoid the more glaring and obvious transgressions, we shall ignorantly incur the guilt of many *omissions* or *neglects* of duty. Not knowing the full extent of our obligations, we may fall far short of what we ought to be, without being conscious of the least deficiency. For our omissions of duty must necessarily escape our notice, if the duties omitted have not previously engaged our attention.

Human errors, however, cannot all be accounted for by the want of moral information; for in many instances where we have been previously informed of our duty, we yet transgress. This happens from one or other of the following causes; from the influence of passion or immediate temptation; from the influence of habit; or from the effect of self-delusion. Each of these sources of misconduct requires a distinct consideration.

SECTION II

OF THE INFLUENCE OF PASSION OR IMMEDIATE TEMPTATION.

By passion I mean generally that state of mind which is produced by any extraordinary

good or evil, actually experienced or immediately in prospect. By the constitution of our nature we cannot avoid *desiring* what appears capable of conferring enjoyment, or *fearing* what threatens us with pain; we cannot but *love* whatever has contributed to our happiness; we cannot but feel *dislike* or *resentment* towards the cause which has occasioned us detriment or suffering. Did we never entertain any desires or fears, any joys or sorrows, any attachments or dislikes, but such, and in such degree, as their several objects, when viewed in the light of calm and impartial reason, would fully justify, our conduct would be in all respects conformable to the rule of duty, since virtue, as we have seen, is nothing else than that course of conduct which is most conducive to our happiness. Why then is it that our passions are ever excited by improper objects, or in undue degree? Why is it that we ever desire any thing but what is really good, or fear or shun any thing but what is really evil? It can only be from some imperfect or mistaken apprehensions of good or evil. In no other way can we account for human misconduct, since it is impossible that we should ever prefer what we clearly perceive, *at the very*

moment of our choice, to be productive of misery to us. But so limited are our faculties, so narrow our views, that we do not always see where our true interest lies. We view things frequently in a wrong light. We imagine evil to be good, and good evil. We look no farther than to immediate effects, and choose the present pleasure, or shun the present pain, thoughtless or ignorant of those remoter consequences, which are of far greater importance to our happiness, and which, did we clearly and constantly discern them, would necessarily exert their due influence upon our conduct. But why is it that such delusions exist in cases where moral instruction is not wanting? That they who are altogether uninformed on the subject of duty, should be thus misled by vicious passion, is not to be wondered at. But that those into whose minds the precepts of duty have been early and carefully instilled; that those who have been repeatedly admonished of the mischievous tendency of vice, and impressed with all the force of the obligations to virtue, should yet continue, in opposition to their better judgment, the slaves of evil passions,—knowing and approving what is right, yet following what is wrong,—seems

hardly explicable except upon the supposition of the inherent depravity of human nature. In thus reflecting, however, we overlook the imperfect nature of that moral instruction from which we expect so much, and forget the other requisites which are wanting to render it effectual. We do not reflect that moral instruction is *general* and *abstract*, while the situations and circumstances in which we should apply that instruction, are *particular*, and it is seldom that an exact correspondence can be perceived between the two. In learning the lessons of moral duty, we usually take for our examples or illustrations the plainest and most simple cases, where there is no room for doubt or subterfuge, no possibility of questioning what is right and what is wrong. Now these plain and simple cases in which the truth appears so obvious, rarely, if ever, occur in our own actual experience; and in every particular situation in which we are tempted to what is wrong, we are sure to find some circumstances which appear to ourselves peculiar, and which render our present feelings and conduct justifiable in our own eyes, by persuading us that our case is such as not to be comprehended under the general rule. And how-

ever palpably we may have erred in reality, and in the judgment of every impartial observer, we still detest in the *abstract* the crime of which we have been guilty; we still approve in *theory* the rule which we have broken. It is not sufficiently attended to, that the moment of temptation produces *a different state of mind* from that which existed in the hour of calm reflection. When, in the hour of calm reflection, we contemplate virtue in the abstract, and review the various arguments and persuasions which are urged to enforce it, all is clear and obvious, and virtue appears so evidently the means best calculated for promoting our happiness, that we wonder at our own folly in ever yielding to temptation. But when we descend from speculation to action, from general views of virtue in the abstract to those particular circumstances in which our knowledge should be reduced to practice, the case is then materially altered. We have then to decide, not upon the broad question whether virtue or vice be most conducive to our happiness, but *under which of these denominations we must rank a certain line of conduct*, which we are previously inclined to follow. Here there is so much room for nice distinctions and sophistical reasonings, so great

a difficulty in taking an enlarged view of the consequences of the conduct in question, and in freeing the mind from all false impressions and erroneous conceptions, so as to see every thing in its true light, that it is no wonder, if the course which promises the greatest immediate enjoyment, too frequently obtains our preference. And even when the sinful act in question is one which we have often committed, and as often repented of, (in which case it would seem impossible that we should be again deceived as to its nature,) still habit may render the omission of it so painful, and that pain may so engross the attention, and so repress the exercise of reflection, as that all our former resolutions shall be forgotten, and all remoter consequences be altogether *for the moment* excluded from our view. Immediate consequences, to beings of such limited faculties as ours, have naturally the greatest influence. Their nearness gives them to our apprehensions such a magnitude and certainty, and presents them to us in such vivid colours, that they are apt, without some effort to prevent it, to engross our whole attention; while remoter consequences, if they occur to our thoughts at all, appear so faint and dubious, that they seldom weigh upon

our minds with an influence at all proportioned to their real moment. When we come to experience those remoter consequences, we reproach and wonder at our folly in not having been influenced by them at the proper time; but we deceive ourselves, if we imagine, that we saw them as clearly *then*, as we have learned to see them *since*.*

SECTION III.

OF THE INFLUENCE OF HABIT.

The next subject which claims our attention in investigating the sources of human error, is *habit*. Habit is commonly defined a facility of doing a thing acquired by having done it frequently. This definition is sufficiently correct, so far as regards particular actions or motions of the body. The facility, which we acquire by long practice, of performing certain motions which were at first difficult, is a fact obvious to the most common observation, and may doubtless be explained on physical principles, by supposing that the muscles and nerves subservient to the performance of the motions, acquire, by being frequently called into action,

* Note X.

a greater degree of excitability or strength. But those habits with which the moralist is chiefly concerned, imply not merely a *facility*, but an *inclination* or *impulse* to perform certain actions, attended with an uneasiness in omitting them. These moral habits cannot be very satisfactorily explained, till we better understand in what particular way the brain and nervous system are concerned in the production of human thought and volition. But if it be allowed that they are concerned in some way, it is obvious that a similar explanation to that which has been given of corporeal habits, may be applied to mental habits also; so that there is no occasion to rest in the unsatisfactory conclusion of some philosophers, that the law of habit is "a part of our original constitution, for which we can assign no cause but the will of him who made us."* Be this, however, as it may, the fact is certain, that habit has not less influence over our conceptions and judgments, than over the nerves and muscles of the body. Our thoughts get accustomed to run in a certain train. Our minds become familiarized by custom with certain conceptions, which invariably present themselves on certain occasions, to

* Reid on the Active Powers. Essay iii. ch. 3.

the exclusion of all other ideas. Habituated to regard an object in one particular point of view, we become incapable of looking at it in any other aspect. Thus we *think* and *judge*, as well as *act*, by habit. Hence we may derive a rational explanation of the force of prejudice, and the intolerant spirit of bigotry. Men of narrow minds, when once they have been led, by education or the circumstances of their condition, to regard an important subject in one particular point of view, become incapable from habit of forming upon that subject any new conceptions, or following any new train of thought. Hence their firm persuasion of the correctness of their own sentiments, and their disposition to think it impossible that any one can *honestly* or *sincerely* maintain a different opinion. If then our *judgment* is liable to be thus influenced by habit, it is no wonder that our *passions* should also; for our passions all depend on the conceptions or judgments which we form respecting good and evil, and those conceptions of good or evil which present themselves most readily or with the greatest vividness to our minds, must always prevail in influencing our conduct. Can we then wonder that a pleasure which we have been long accus-

tomed to enjoy or think of, and which consequently must present itself so promptly and distinctly to our minds, should have extraordinary power to excite our desires, and prevail over objects far more important to our happiness, but less readily or less distinctly occurring to our thoughts? All permanent dispositions, both good and evil, may be considered as habits of thinking and judging. The man of proud disposition has the habit of thinking continually of his own merits or consequence. The covetous man has the habit of constantly fixing his attention on the advantage arising from the acquisition or possession of money. The selfish character is habituated to think only of what may promote or injure his own interest. The benevolent character is accustomed to consider the feelings, comfort, or welfare of others. In these and similar instances, it cannot be doubted, that there are different turns of thought, different associations of ideas, tendencies to form different conceptions, or to view objects in different points of view; and these diversities of thinking and judging, though they may owe their first origin to early impressions or the circumstances of education and situation, derive their strength

and permanence from the law of habit. The most remarkable instance of the force of habit is that in which we observe it surmount the strongest resolutions and the most powerful considerations of interest, for the sake of some accustomed gratification of sense. The habitual drunkard, in his hours of sobriety and reflection, is often fully sensible of the ruinous consequences which he is incurring; he foresees at these times the maladies, the poverty, the disgrace, which his intemperance is fast bringing upon him, and forms the most sincere resolution to forsake his evil courses; but the moment of temptation no sooner arrives, than his good purposes are given to the winds, and the deed of folly is again committed, which he seemed for ever to have renounced. In this instance, the power of habit may be accounted for by the physical sensations occasioned by the intermission of a long-accustomed indulgence. In the case of the habitual drunkard, it is well known, that the want of his accustomed excitement produces very distressing sensations of languor and nervousness; and as it is the usual effect of pain to engage the exclusive attention of the mind, it is conceivable that, by this means, the good resolutions which

he had formed in the hour of calm reflection, may be for the moment removed from his thoughts, or if remembered, that the motives which prompted them may have lost entirely their former force.*

SECTION IV.

OF SELF-DECEPTION.

It has already been remarked as the effect of temptation to produce a different state of mind from that which existed in the hour of calm reflection. It is now my object to point out the particular modes in which this different state of mind is produced; or, in other words, to detail the several artifices and wiles by which temptation imposes upon our judgment and seduces us into error. Did vice appear to us always in its true colours, it is very certain that it could never be the object of our choice. It is only, therefore, by appearing under some disguise or concealment, which hides from our view its painful consequences, or encourages the expectation of evading them, that it ever obtains our preference.

* Note Y.

1. Vice sometimes imposes on our judgment by arraying itself in the garb of virtue or innocence. For this purpose little more is generally required than the simple artifice of a *softening term.* Thus, to the mind agitated by vindictive passion, revenge assumes the name of justice, and appears no longer criminal. Thus sensuality loses its odious character under the specious pretext of being merely the innocent indulgence of natural appetite. Duplicity also recommends itself under the name of prudence, and ambition imposes upon its votary under the appearance of zeal for the public good. In those cases more especially where virtue lies midway between two vicious extremes, how easily do we contrive to extend its limits on that side to which inclination leans, and thus to reconcile our consciences to guilt. How widely different, for example, is the notion of economy in the minds of the prodigal and the miser. How easily does the man of weak and irresolute character persuade himself that he only pays that reasonable attention to the wishes of others, which courtesy requires; while the man of unbending obstinacy and inexorable sternness of character, finds an exception to that duty in every instance where the wishes of

others interfere with his own. All men admire and approve of virtue in the abstract; but each forms to himself such a standard of virtue as is most conformable with his own dispositions, and contrives to accommodate it, in every particular instance, to the indulgence of his present inclination.

2. Another instance of that delusive influence by which temptation overcomes our virtuous purposes, is when *it gains upon us by imperceptible steps.* Instead of instantly flying from the scene of danger, we allow ourselves to face it, but not without the earnest resolution, which we fancy ourselves fully able to maintain, of adhering steadily to our virtuous principles. Then we are drawn into some small compliances, which seem so remote from the guilt we have resolved to shun, that they excite no alarms, and call, we think, for no rebukes of conscience. One compliance, however, leads on to a second, and that again to others still more criminal; and, ever, as we continue to advance, it becomes more and more difficult to recede, till at length all thought of resistance vanishes, and nought remains but to mourn our folly with the tears of a bitter, though too late, repentance.

3. A third delusion, which occasions the neglect of duty, consists in *deferring the execution of our good purposes to a supposed more convenient season.* When conscience urges us to the discharge of any painful duty, we readily admit the fond belief, that there are some peculiar circumstances in our present situation, which justify us in delaying the performance. We do not so far outrage our good principles as altogether to relinquish our laudable purposes; we only put off the execution of them to some future period, when the peculiar difficulties which now deter us, will be, as we imagine, removed;—a most deceitful and dangerous plea, which serves at once to gratify our evil inclination, and to maintain us in our own esteem. For feeling our good purposes to be sincere, and believing that we shall one time carry them completely into effect, we take the same credit to ourselves, as if that were done already. And as we must ever find some difficulties in the way of duty, we ever continue to allege the same excuses for our omission of it, and that future more convenient season, upon which we so fondly reckon, is always looked for, but never arrives.

Besides these arts of self-deception, which belong to those occasions when temptation is actually present, there are some others which mislead us in the hour of calm deliberation, when we take a review of our past conduct and form a general estimate of our own characters. Some men are so blinded by extreme conceit, or, from the neglect of self-inspection, remain such total strangers to their own hearts, that they are perfectly unaware of the vices to which they are subject, and do not even suspect themselves to be chargeable with failings, which are manifest enough to all observers. It is not always, however, that even an unreflecting person can remain in such total ignorance of his own guilt. Sometimes he will be betrayed into actions so glaringly criminal, that he cannot but feel a degree of uneasiness arising from a diminution of his self-esteem. But self-love is on these occasions ever fertile in excuses and justifications to remove the uneasiness of an accusing conscience, and to reinstate the transgressor in his own esteem. Here again that misuse of language which served to betray us into the commission of guilt, serves also to palliate it, after it has been committed. It is curious to observe in how very different a light

we view the self-same qualities, according as they belong to others, or to ourselves. What in others we call vices and crimes, in ourselves we term weaknesses, indiscretions, or pardonable failings. What in others we call pride, in ourselves is merely a proper feeling of self-respect. What in others we should stigmatize with the names of malice and revenge, in ourselves we approve as manly spirit or just resentment. What in others is bigotry and intolerance, in ourselves is zeal. What in others is dissipation, luxury, and profuseness, in ourselves we consider as generosity and innocent enjoyment. Or if we cannot thus entirely change in our ideas the nature of our faults, we at least palliate them to our consciences by various excuses, which our self-love is ever active and ingenious in devising. We plead in our own behalf the peculiar force of the temptations to which we were exposed; we plead our ignorance of consequences; we plead the fancied rectitude of our intentions; we plead the necessity, under which we supposed ourselves to be, of complying with established custom, universal example, or the authority of superiors; and thus we conceal from ourselves the extent of our guilt, even when we are aware

that we have committed improper actions. To enter at large into a particular consideration of these excuses, would be a tedious and a useless task. There are, however, two modes of self-justification which demand a little more attention.

One of these consists in *the unfair and artful manner in which we draw comparisons between ourselves and others.* We are fond of comparing ourselves rather with the more depraved, than the better part of mankind, and become elevated in our own opinion in proportion to the numbers whom we find, or imagine, less virtuous than ourselves. We are apt also to magnify the importance of those good qualities which belong to ourselves, and to depreciate those which we see in others; our own faults, on the other hand, we judge with the utmost indulgence, while we censure without mercy those which we discern in others, and are ourselves free from. Moreover, we imagine, in the case of our own misconduct, that we were under some peculiar temptations, which render excusable in us those errors which would not be excusable in others; or we think it a sufficient justification of ourselves to say, that, had

others our temptations and our passions, they would be guilty of the same transgressions. This may be true; but, though true, it is no just ground of excuse: for if we are subject to temptations from which others are exempt, we should reflect, that they have also temptations of their own, to which we are not liable. Every one, in fact, has some evil passion to contend with; some trial or temptation to exercise his virtue; and no one can in every respect fulfil his duty, without some effort of resolution or self-denial. Let each, therefore, bear his own burden; let each contend earnestly against his own passions and temptations, and let none excuse himself from this painful task by the false plea, that he alone finds difficulties and obstructions in the course of virtue, while to others it is smooth and easy.

The other mode of self-justification alluded to, consists in *balancing our virtues against our vices, and excusing the latter by the supposed preponderance of the former.* Finding that there are some virtues which we can easily practise by reason of their accordance with our natural temper, and others which the opposition of our prevailing dispositions renders dif-

ficult, we fondly make our practice of the former an excuse for our omission of the latter. We allege the force of our natural dispositions in extenuation of the vices to which we are subject, and yet allow not that the same circumstance detracts in the least from the merit of our good qualities. Thus taking credit to ourselves for all that is good in our characters, and finding a ready excuse for all that is evil, we become filled with a self-complacence, which precludes all virtuous exertion, and consequently all moral improvement. According to a man's own opinion of himself, it is only in some few and inconsiderable points that he transgresses, while his virtues are of such amount, as amply to compensate for all his faults. But these few and inconsiderable transgressions will generally be found, upon inquiry, to include all the instances in which his virtue is fairly put to the trial: and those numerous virtues which are supposed to counterbalance the insignificant number of his failings, will prove to be nothing more than the mere negation of crimes, which he was never in fact so much as tempted to commit. It is this tendency to make a compromise between duty and inclination, that has led mankind so often to mistake the

essentials of religion, and to substitute its easiest and least important duties in the room of those which are indispensable, but difficult. Willing to spare themselves the trouble of contending with their evil passions, men have devised a shorter and easier method of fulfilling, as they imagine, the duties of religion. They have set up *faith* as paramount to *practice*, and mistaken for the manifestation of a religious spirit, an intemperate and intolerant zeal for speculative dogmas. They have satisfied their consciences by paying a scrupulous regard to all the external forms and ceremonies of religion, while living in the continual violation of some of the plainest moral duties. They have contrived, in short, by one delusion or another, to detach religion from its natural connexion with morality, where only it is exercised upon its proper objects and yields its proper fruits, and have made its whole business to consist in empty observances, altogether distinct from the regulation of the heart and conduct, and far more easy than the subjugation of the passions.

SECTION V.

OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER, AND THE CAUSES WHICH DETERMINE IT.

In considering the subject of human error, and the means of correcting it, it is obvious to remark that all men are not alike disposed to the same virtues, or liable to the same vices. The fault to which one man is almost irresistibly prone, another is never even tempted to commit. The virtue which one man practises with ease, because it accords with his natural temper, requires from another the strongest efforts, to conquer the repugnance of his adverse inclinations. In human character we observe the same wonderful combination of variety with uniformity, which is so striking a characteristic of all the works of nature. No two individuals have precisely the same inclinations, or the same combination of dispositions. For though the elements of which the human character is composed, are few and simple; though it is not difficult to enumerate the several passions and propensities to which mankind are subject, yet, as the features of the human face, by their minute differences of shape

and proportion, form an almost endless variety of countenances, so the several passions and propensities of our nature, by the different proportions of strength in which they are combined, present a diversity not less astonishing of moral character. In the government of conduct, accordingly, we are not all placed in precisely the same circumstances. All are liable to errors of some kind, but all are not equally liable to the same errors. Each individual has some peculiar tendency to error, some prevailing disposition, some besetting sin. The cause of this diversity of character among mankind evidently demands the moralist's particular attention, and requires to be investigated, before any rational plan of moral discipline can be devised.

The peculiarities of human character are partly *natural*,—partly *factitious* or *acquired*.

Though some have maintained that all are born alike, and that circumstances and education alone make all the difference which we observe in the talents and dispositions of men, yet this opinion is at variance with such a multitude of facts, which experience daily offers to

our attention, that few will now avow themselves its advocates. Children manifest a difference of character at so very early an age, and under the influence of circumstances and treatment so nearly the same, and the character, moreover, which they first manifest, is so uniformly retained, though with various modifications, in after life, that it cannot, with any appearance of reason, be denied, that we derive from nature certain tendencies and capacities, arising probably from some peculiarities of corporeal structure, which yet remain to be explained. If indeed it be true, that sensation is the source of all our knowledge and all our feelings, it is obvious that different modes of sensation must produce different results of intellect and disposition. And as the brain and nerves are indisputably the organs of sensation, we may easily conceive, though we cannot show, that there are certain differences in the minute structure of these organs, or in the proportion of their several parts, which create a difference in the power of receiving and retaining impressions, and thus produce that natural diversity, which appears to exist, in the characters and abilities of men. The term sensation, be it observed, is not to be understood as

applying solely to those impressions which we receive by the senses from external objects. Nerves, it is well known, are distributed over all the interior parts of the body, and these, though they convey not such distinct impressions as those received by the organs of sense, are not without a certain power of feeling, being susceptible of some obscure sensations of pleasure or pain, arising from the healthy or diseased state of the internal parts, or from the vigorous or sluggish action of the internal functions; and it is probably on these internal sensations that the modifications of human character chiefly depend. A state of disease renders their influence evident; for whenever the internal processes of secretion or digestion are impeded or vitiated, the dispositions themselves undergo a corresponding change; the mind once ardent, sanguine, and elate, becomes oppressed with languor and despondence, and the temper which was distinguished by good humour and kindness, is soured into peevishness and discontent. The phænomena of madness, which may almost always be traced to some derangement of the nervous system, afford a still more striking evidence of the dependence of mind and character on bodily structure. It

matters not, so far as regards this question, what opinion we embrace respecting the nature of the human mind;—whether we believe it to be the result of a certain organization of matter, or a something altogether distinct from and superadded to the bodily frame; since the most strenuous advocate of the latter opinion cannot deny, what daily experience so undeniably proves, that the soul is necessarily affected by the condition of her fleshly tenement, and that all her faculties are exercised only by the instrumentality of corporeal organs.

Physiologists have long ago remarked the connexion which so evidently appears to subsist between the structure of the body and the character of the mind, and have endeavoured to enumerate the several original constitutions, or *temperaments*, as they are called, which form the groundwork of all the varieties of human character. The ancients reckoned four of these; the *Sanguine*, marked by ardour and fickleness of character; the *Bilious*, distinguished by firmness, inflexibility, and decision; the *Melancholic*, producing timidity, distrust, and sadness; the *Phlegmatic*, which evinces itself by indolence of mind and body, by tran-

quil passions, feeble imagination, and moderate powers of intellect. To these some modern physiologists have added two other temperaments, under the names of *Muscular* and *Nervous*.* The subject is obviously one which demands the moralist's peculiar attention, and ethical science can never be considered as complete, until the extent and nature of that influence which constitutional temperament exercises upon intellectual and moral character has been fully ascertained. This, however, is an investigation which I must leave to those who are more intimately conversant with physiological science. The subject, indeed, is yet but very imperfectly understood, and seems not to have engaged, from those who are best qualified for the inquiry, the attention to which its importance manifestly entitles it. Enough, however, is known to enable us to decide the question which is of greatest moment, and to warrant us in saying, that whatever may be the force of constitutional temperament, it is not such as to be beyond our ability to modify, correct, or control. Were this the case, education would be

* For a particular description of these temperaments, see "*Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme, par P. J. G. Cabanis; Sixième Memoire:*" —also "*Elemens de Physiologie, par A. Richerand*, ch. VI." or an extract from the same in Rees's Cyclopædia, article *Man*.

altogether a delusive and nugatory science; the eloquence of the pulpit would be a mere waste of words; and the task of the moralist would be reduced to a bare enumeration and description of the qualities of human character, for no higher object than the gratification of curiosity. It must, indeed, be admitted, that, by no means of discipline or system of education can we entirely obliterate the characters which nature has impressed. We cannot so far control the influence of constitutional temperament, as to create an entirely artificial character, and to reduce precisely to the same standard of intellect and temper individuals whom nature has cast in a different mould. Nor is this desirable, since variety of character is conducive, as we have seen, to human happiness and improvement. Yet much unquestionably is within our power. There is obviously an *acquired*, as well as a *natural* character. Early impressions and accidental associations create a variety of prejudices, predilections, and antipathies. Custom and example exert a powerful influence over our sentiments and pursuits. And different conditions or circumstances of life, by presenting different temptations and spheres of action, greatly diversify the manifestations of

natural character. These, together with the influence of direct instruction, constitute *Education* in its most extensive sense; and it is unquestionably education thus understood, which makes the widest difference between man and man; for even where natural constitution is the same, the utmost extremes of virtue and vice, of knowledge and ignorance, may arise entirely and solely from its influence. And though it may not be able completely to subdue the tendencies of nature, it can yet implant a principle of duty superior in power to every misleading impulse.

By the term Education is commonly meant that system of instruction and discipline which is applied to the young for the purpose of leading them to virtuous habits and useful attainments; and this is evidently a most important object of attention to the moralist, to the parent, and to all whose benevolence is employed in devising means for promoting the moral improvement of mankind. But the task of training the mind to virtue should by no means be confined to the season of youth, or considered as the business solely of instructors. It is an object which should be attended to through

every period of life, and the education which has been begun in youth by others, should be continued, and pursued to the last, by ourselves. For whatever care may have been exercised by parents and instructors to instil good principles into our minds, we must all be sensible, that room enough is left for correction and improvement; and it is therefore to every individual a most important object of inquiry, *by what means this correction and improvement of character may be most effectually accomplished.* It is of this branch only of moral education, which may be denominated the science of *Self-Discipline*, that I shall now attempt to treat; for the subject of education in general would require for itself a separate work. The foregoing investigation of the sources of human error, and the causes which operate in the formation of character, will serve to facilitate the prosecution of this inquiry, which leads us to the consideration of a new class of duties, distinguished from those which have already engaged our attention, by the name of *Instrumental Duties.*

CHAP. II.

OF SELF-DISCIPLINE, OR THE MEANS OF CORRECTING AND IMPROVING THE CHARACTER.

The two great requisites for enabling us to practise virtue are the *knowledge of duty*, and the *knowledge of our own hearts.*

SECTION I.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF DUTY, AND THE MEANS OF ATTAINING IT.

The knowledge of duty will appear to many persons a very simple and easy acquisition, hardly requiring any study or instruction, except in the case of those whose moral education has been perverted or wholly neglected. But though the great outlines of human duty may be sufficiently familiar to most, there are few or none whose moral principles are not defective, and even in some respects erroneous. That partial ignorance of duty or perversion of moral principle, which arises from the unobserved influence of party, of fashion, of custom,

or example, and which disposes us, according to the class with which we associate, or the station which we occupy, to think lightly of certain vices, and to hold particular qualities in undue estimation, is extremely common. Equally prevalent is the tendency, which has been remarked in individuals, to mould their system of morality in conformity with their own dispositions, by exalting the importance of those virtues which they find it easy to practise, and extenuating the faults which they find it difficult to overcome. And who is there that can be justly said to know his duty *in its full extent?*—that does not overlook some of his obligations, and err at least by the *omission* of what he ought to do, though not by the *commission* of positive crime? Who is there, we may with still more reason ask, that knows virtue *in all its excellence*, and vice *in all its odiousness;* and whose *tastes and affections*, as well as his *reason*, are engaged on the side of rectitude? What we want for the guidance of our conduct is, not that obscure and superficial knowledge of duty which is all that the generality possess, but a knowledge that is *accurate*, *complete*, and *deeply impressed.*

1. It must be *accurate*, not including any mistaken principles, not formed upon any limited views. Our system of morality must not be such as will bend to our own inclinations, or favour our Self-esteem. It must not be a mere system of *prudential policy*. It must not be a system framed merely *with a view to reputation*, and made conformable with whatever corrupt maxims or principles may chance to be in vogue. It must be altogether independent of our own prejudices and inclinations; it must differ in many instances from the principles inculcated and acted on by those around us.

2. Our system of morality, besides being thus correct and accurate, must likewise be *full and complete*. It must omit no duty which we have an opportunity of practising; it must overlook no error into which we may be liable to fall. It must present to us, in short, an elevated and complete standard of moral excellence, framed upon the truest principles and most enlarged views, and well fitted, both by its correctness and comprehensiveness, to be the criterion of our characters and the model of our imitation.

3. Nor is even this sufficient. Our moral knowledge, in order to be available, must not only be thus correct and comprehensive,—it must also be *deeply impressed.* The idea of our duty must be *familiar* to our minds; it must be ever uppermost in our thoughts; not merely contemplated in the hour of calm reflection, and lost from sight in the eagerness of our pursuits when its influence is needed most, but presenting itself readily on all occasions to our minds, and forcing our attention to its dictates, even in the moment of temptation, and amidst the vehemence of excited passion. Virtue must be made the object, not only of our *calm approbation*, but of our *warm affection.* We must acquire a true *taste* for whatever is excellent. We must learn to feel such lively admiration of virtue and such strong abhorrence of vice, as will be sufficient to prevail over every other passion, and completely to subdue every impulse to what is wrong.

It is therefore to be considered how such a knowledge of duty, and such feelings with regard to it, are to be acquired. And here it is obvious to remark, that there is little hope of this acquirement being thoroughly made, unless

the foundation be laid in youth. We are so much the creatures of imitation and habit, that what we individually like or dislike, approve or disapprove, depends perhaps less upon our own experience of what is salutary or hurtful, than upon what we have been taught by others to consider so. Even independently of all direct instruction, the principle of conscience or moral restraint is formed, as we have heretofore shown, entirely on the regard which we find ourselves obliged to pay to the sentiments and feelings of one another; and it cannot therefore be reasonably expected, that one who has been brought up from his childhood among persons of abandoned character, should entertain in his maturity a proper sense of the turpitude and odiousness of those vices with which no early recollections of shame are associated in his mind. The best system of discipline, therefore, is undoubtedly that which consists in the example of parents or instructors, and in the assiduous use of those numberless means and opportunities, which constant intercourse affords, of conveying good impressions to the youthful mind. It is not the object of the present treatise to enter at large into this branch of education, on which the writings of an

admired authoress, so distinguished for their enlightened views and practical good sense, have left us little to desire. I would only, therefore, urge the importance of commencing at as early a period as possible the inculcation of duty. This, in truth, should be the first object in all our plans of education, and the important work should be commenced from the earliest dawn of reason. Even with the simple narratives which first interest the attention of the awakened faculties, lessons of moral wisdom may be effectually instilled. And as soon as the understanding is sufficiently advanced to ascend from particular to general ideas, the young mind should be led to take a more extensive survey of all the more obvious qualities of character, and taught to observe the advantages of the good and the pernicious tendency of the bad. Descriptions of the several virtues and vices, accompanied by proper representations of their respective consequences, and illustrated by properly selected examples from history or biography, should form a principal subject of the studies of the young through every period of their education; for surely it concerns them not less to be thus instructed in their *duty*, and made acquainted with *human nature*, than to

have their memories burdened with that knowledge of words, which seems to form the main object of the prevailing system of education. In due time, when the faculties of the young are sufficiently matured to enable them to arrange and express their own ideas, their growing powers should be frequently and regularly exercised in the composition of moral essays. Whatever kind of knowledge we wish to impress upon the mind, no method, it is well known, is so effectual for this purpose, as that of making it the subject of composition. And I would earnestly recommend it as a principle of education, the importance of which has not, I think, been duly estimated, both to employ this powerful instrument of mental culture more generally and systematically on all subjects, and to make it more peculiarly subservient to the acquisition of moral knowledge. Considered merely as a means of intellectual improvement, this exercise is of the highest use, as it tends more than any other to cultivate the important habit of observation, and furnishes the best exercise to the judging and reasoning faculties. And when the powers of observation and reflection are thus habitually directed to moral subjects, when the attention is thus

rendered perpetually awake to the qualities of character, and the judgment is constantly exercised in estimating their respective tendencies, an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of virtue, and a deep conviction of its value and importance, can hardly fail to be the result. But in order most effectually to secure this result, the systematic study of duty must be continued beyond the period of youth. It must never indeed be laid aside. Our moral principles may be always improving, and gaining fresh accessions of strength. Our knowledge of duty may continually be growing more accurate, extensive, and profound ; and our love of virtue and abhorrence of vice may be more and more confirmed and augmented by ever-multiplying associations. But this can only be accomplished by making the study of duty a regular, daily business. And I would earnestly recommend it to every one, as a most important means of strengthening and improving his moral principles, to devote a portion of every day to *practical reading.* To acquire that knowledge of duty which alone can be of any avail for the right government of our conduct, that knowledge which is at once accurate, complete, and deeply impressed, is evidently a task which

requires from every individual, whatever may have been the advantages of his education, unremitted attention, and constant perseverance. No one can reasonably pretend to have been so judiciously trained as to be in possession, and under the influence, of moral principles which are free alike from error and from defect. Prejudices of some kind, more or less unfavourable to right feeling or right conduct, arising either from the prevailing maxims of the times, or class, or party, to which we belong, or from the secret influence of our constitutional dispositions, exist in the minds of all. Such prejudices are not easily removed. While under their influence, we do not, of course, see them in the light of errors, but of truths which appear indisputable; and it is only by slow degrees, and by means of the frequent contemplation of some better standard of moral excellence, that our minds can be emancipated from their influence. To render also our system of morality complete, so that we may constantly have all our duties in full view before us, is an object which manifestly requires that the constant attention of the mind should be directed to these subjects. And even though no other end were to be answered by this practice, it

would still demand our observance for the purpose of deeply impressing our minds with the obligations of duty. However obvious the truths of morality may appear, and however unanswerable the arguments may be, which recommend virtue and dissuade from vice, they will not have their due effect upon our conduct, unless perpetually urged upon our attention. In a case where so many passions interfere to blind or pervert our judgment, bare conviction in the moments of cool reflection will not suffice. Arguments must be repeatedly enforced; persuasions must be incessantly urged; line must be added upon line and precept upon precept; or our virtuous purposes will be unequal to the contest with the temptations by which we are constantly assailed. This consideration is alone sufficient to show the importance of making the study of duty our constant daily business. And this may be done by almost every one without any inconvenient sacrifice of the time which is claimed by other objects. For few persons are so wholly engrossed by business, as not to find in every day some intervals of leisure; and if only a portion of these be regularly devoted to this employment, the benefit will well repay the pains, though the effect may be so slow and gradual as hardly to be noticed.

In addition to this more direct study of duty, there is another important instrument of discipline, which is necessary to give a proper tone and character to our moral sentiments—I mean the *exercises of devotion.* Having already shown the importance and necessity of supporting moral principle by the aid of religious feelings, I shall not now return to that topic, though it obviously constitutes the primary ground of the obligation to religious worship. All that now remains is, to show the proper use of devotional exercises, according to those views of religion which have already been offered to the reader's judgment.

Religious worship consists in the solemn expression of all the feelings and affections which are due to the Supreme Being. The several distinct parts which it includes are these, Adoration, Thanksgiving, Confession, and Supplication. Adoration is the expression of our high veneration of the divine excellences. Thanksgiving is the expression of our gratitude to God for his manifold benefits. Confession is the language of sorrow for our transgressions of duty. Supplication is the utterance of our desires to live more perfectly in conformity with

his will for the future. The question of chief importance to be here considered is, for what purpose, or with what views and expectations, should we thus express the feelings of piety. Not, surely, with the idea of soothing the Deity by our praises, as an earthly prince is soothed by the voice of flattery: not, certainly, for the purpose of giving him information of our wants; still less with the vain hope of altering the purposes of his wisdom by our importunity; but simply, as appears to me, for the purpose of *cherishing and strengthening* the devout feelings which we thus express. This will readily be acknowledged to be the proper object of devotional exercises, so far as they consist in Adoration, Thanksgiving, and Confession; but Supplication, or Prayer properly so called, is generally considered in a different light, as being directly efficacious in procuring from the Divine Being the benefits implored. Yet does not experience itself sufficiently prove the fallacy of this idea? Can any one pretend to say that the utterance of his wishes in prayer has invariably, or even frequently, been followed by their fulfilment? Can it be denied that our most sincere and fervent supplications often fail of obtaining for us the objects of our desire?

And even in those cases where the prayer is followed by the attainment of its object, it cannot justly be concluded that the prayer was the means of this attainment, unless it can be shown that the ordinary operation of the laws of nature was inadequate to produce the same effect. Nothing, therefore, can prove the efficacy of prayer, but either the constant fulfilment of every petition which is offered, or the manifest miraculous interference of divine agency in all cases of fulfilment. Such evidence no rational person will pretend to adduce; for uniform experience sufficiently evinces that nothing ever takes place by arbitrary appointment. There is a cause in the order of nature for every event which occurs, and there is no other way to obtain the objects of our desire, than to apply such means as the order of nature points out. The Divine Being having thought fit, for the wisest purposes, to withdraw himself from our immediate cognizance, and manifesting himself, as he does, only by certain invariable laws which are never found to be suspended or infringed, to observe and act conformably to those laws, is the only conduct which rational and enlightened piety approves. Placed in a world, where good and evil, pleasure and pain, are set

before us as incitements to action and means of improvement, and where we are left to be the architects of our own fortune, we must carefully consider the circumstances of our condition, and diligently apply those means of working out our happiness, which nature's unalterable laws prescribe. We must not imagine that we can sooth the Deity by our homage, or change him by our prayers, or induce him in any instance to depart from the usual order of his providence, in order to bestow upon us the objects of our desire. We must look around us to discover the natural means by which only those objects are to be obtained, and depend solely upon our own exertions for the accomplishment of our wishes.* It follows not, however, from these observations, that all expression of our desires in the exercises of devotion is useless: for if it be admitted that in expressing our veneration for the character of God, our sense of dependance upon him, our gratitude for his bounties, and our regret for the imperfection of our obedience to him, we cherish and strengthen in our hearts these several

* Non votis, neque suppliciis muliebribus auxilia deorum parantur; vigilando, agendo, bene consulendo, prospere omnia cedunt. Ubi socordiæ tete, atque ignaviæ tradideris, nequicquam Deos implores: irati, infestique sunt.—Sallust.

feelings of piety, it cannot surely be denied that the expression of *virtuous desires*—of our earnest wish and resolute purpose to renounce whatever is displeasing in his sight, and to live in future more conformably to his will, may be useful in a similar way. Petitions for *spiritual mercies*, that is, for greater strength to resist temptation, for wisdom to discern and firmness to renounce our errors, and for ability to discharge with faithfulness every duty, and to advance continually in every virtuous attainment, form very properly the main subject of all judicious supplications. Let such petitions be considered in the same light as the other parts of prayer;—let them be viewed as merely the expression of another class of devout sentiments and feelings; and though no extraordinary or miraculous effects be expected from them, their natural influence in strengthening and confirming our virtuous desires will be a sufficient and far more tenable argument in recommendation of their use. With respect to such petitions as relate to *temporal benefits*, the case is somewhat different. It may be questioned, indeed, whether such petitions are at all admissible in prayer, and certainly they are improper, in a high degree, when offered with-

out condition or reserve. But when accompanied, as they should always be, with the sincere declaration of our entire willingness to submit to whatever the superior wisdom of heaven may appoint, they may be considered, not as a means of obtaining the benefits in question, but merely as the expression of another class of devout sentiments, namely those of Trust and Resignation, and in this view they may be adopted in our addresses to God, for the same purpose, and with the same advantage, as the other parts of prayer. The end and use, then, of the exercises of devotion is solely this,—to maintain in the mind an habitual sense of God and futurity as the guide and support of moral principle. They draw our thoughts into serious meditation on the most important of all subjects; they lead us to reflect on the great end of our existence, and to consider our duty in connexion with those high truths which form its strongest sanction: they impress us with a more lively sense of the presence and inspection of the Deity: they place us for a time beyond the influence of the world's allurements and distractions, and diffuse over us a solemnity of feeling highly favourable to salutary reflection and moral improvement. Except in so far

as they serve these purposes, they are no better than an idle ceremonial, and the most regular and assiduous observance of them is worse than nugatory, if substituted in the room of that purity, integrity, and active usefulness, which constitute true worth of character.

Having now considered the object and use of religious worship in general, let us proceed to review the particular forms or modifications of this duty, and the particular occasions proper for its performance. This part of the subject includes the consideration of *Private Prayer*, *Family Prayer*, and *Public Worship*.

1. *Private Prayer.* As religion, so far as it relates to the important work of self-discipline, is an individual concern, belonging to a person's own conscience; as it is in the secret recesses of our own hearts that those evil desires and passions dwell, which it is the office of religion to control; as it is there that we have to maintain the conflict of virtue, and to establish the principles that are to guide our conduct; there is evidently on this ground a peculiar propriety in private prayer, which is nothing else, in fact, than the exercise of self-examina-

tion under a sense of the divine inspection. It allows of that unrestrained communion with God and conscience, which is essential to a right knowledge of our own hearts, but which social prayer will not so well admit. It confines not our sentiments to a set form of words; it fetters not our thoughts by the necessity of being choice in our language; it imposes not upon our feelings that restraint and reserve which arise from the presence of others;—but allows us to pour out all our hearts, to acknowledge our most hidden guilt, to seek those peculiar aids and consolations of religion, which our peculiar temptations and sorrows require, and in all respects to accommodate our expressions to whatever may be the particular circumstances of our condition. With respect to the occasions which are proper for the exercise of private prayer, obvious reasons suggest the commencement and the close of every day as peculiarly fit for this purpose. What can serve so well to impress our minds with an habitual sense of gratitude to our heavenly father, as thus to review his daily mercies; to think, when we rise, of that ever watchful providence which has guarded our sleeping hours, and when we lie down, to acknowledge the goodness which

has supported and blest us through another day? What better security can we provide for our innocence, than at the commencement of every day, before we are immersed in the cares and occupations of the world, to enter, as it were, into the more immediate presence of God, and there to think of the perils that await us, to form resolutions to withstand our evil passions, and to prepare ourselves for the diligent discharge of all our duties? What more effectual means can we adopt for correcting our errors and urging ourselves onward in the career of virtue, than at the conclusion of every day, when the tumult of the busy world is hushed, when all its passions and its cares are for a season at rest, and all within and without is solemn calm and stillness, to review, as in the presence of the great Supreme, the course of our conduct through the day; to mark with penitential sorrow the instances in which we have transgressed, and to express our sincere wish and firm determination no more to wander from the path of duty?

But solitary exercises of devotion are not alone sufficient to produce a truly religious frame of mind. As our religion will be of very

little value, unless it tend to improve our benevolent feelings, our religious exercises should be made to contribute to this important object; and hence arises the propriety and importance of occasional exercises of *Social Worship.* Solitary exercises of devotion, though they have their appropriate use and peculiar advantages, are apt to generate that spurious and monastic sort of piety, which consists solely in certain enthusiastic feelings, unaccompanied by those fruits of benevolence and usefulness, which are the only proper effect and indication of true piety. But social exercises of devotion possess this great advantage, that they tend to cherish at once all the dispositions which constitute the truly virtuous character. They equally inspire piety to God, and benevolence to man. They lead our thoughts to that great Being, from whom the obligations of religion derive their force, and at the same time present before our view the objects, to whom the actual discharge of those obligations relates. They cherish a piety, not like that which sometimes usurps the name, and which is gloomy, morose, and secluded in its character, but such as true piety should be, cheerful, social, and benevolent. Assembled together as in the presence of our

great common parent, we become more sensible of our mutual relations and our mutual duties. We feel in a more lively manner that we are brethren; and thus animosities and prejudices are softened; the distinctions of rank, those barriers of pride which so widely separate man from his fellow-man, are levelled; sentiments of enlarged benevolence are generated, and the bonds of social union are drawn more close.

These reasons which enforce the exercise of social worship generally, are of especial weight when considered in reference to *Family Prayer.* Home is the school in which the benevolent affections receive their first and chief cultivation. It is the scene too of most of our duties and most of our temptations. Every dictate of reason, therefore, urges, that they who dwell in the same abode, who possess consequently so much influence over each other's happiness, and all whose interests are so closely blended together, should cement and sanctify their union by the bond of religion. This will diffuse through their breasts a steadier, warmer, and more elevated affection; harmonizing all their desires and sentiments, subduing every selfish and angry passion, and disposing them conscien-

tiously to fulfil their several parts, and to aid and co-operate with one another in all their virtuous endeavours. On such occasions, moreover, religious meditations must have a more than common influence upon the mind. When we unite, with those whom we intimately know and tenderly love, in the exercises of devotion, religion recommends itself to our hearts in its most engaging and endearing form, as that which binds us while on earth in closer ties than those of kindred, and inspires the pleasing hope of renewing, in another and a better world, the connexions which constitute so large a part of the happiness of this. Thus in family worship the feelings of devotion are heightened by their association with the kindest and best affections of the heart, and both are elevated and improved by the union.

But in order to cherish that wider benevolence which is due to those who are less intimately connected with us, and which is equally essential to a truly religious spirit, we must add to the exercises already mentioned the observance of *Public Worship.* This is the important bond which unites each separate family with the wider family of mankind at large, and

leads us to extend the range of our benevolence beyond the narrow circle of our kindred and connexions, and to comprehend in our enlarged affections our neighbours, our countrymen, and our brethren of the whole human race. The influence of public worship in softening down the distinctions of society deserves particular attention. In the house of God, "the rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all." This reflection, which so forcibly presents itself in such a scene, must tend to convince the rich and powerful of the utter insignificance of those distinctions which consist in mere external circumstances; must quell by this means their feelings of pride, and lead them to regard in the light of brethren the meanest of their fellow-worshippers. To the poor, on the other hand, it will justly impart a manly feeling of conscious dignity, arising from the sense of that equality which levels all in the sight of God, but calculated, by the very influence of this consideration, to render them less envious of the advantages of elevated station, and less dissatisfied with their own humble lot.

The services of public worship, moreover,

usually include, besides the exercises of devotion, some other more direct means of moral instruction; and though the instructions of the pulpit are too unfrequent to supersede the necessity of private application to the study of duty, they possess an influence peculiar to themselves, which must give them incalculable value and importance in the eyes of all who have at heart the dearest interests of society.

For, in the first place, the mere circumstance of our meeting together for the purpose of learning our duty, and the avowal of principle which this act implies, must operate in some measure as a check against misconduct, and affords ground for greater mutual confidence in our dealings with each other. We cannot so easily abandon ourselves to criminal pursuits, while we pay this public testimony of respect to virtue; for who, without some feelings of shame, can bear to hear the voice of censure thus publicly raised against those very vices of which he is notoriously guilty? By uniting together in the exercises of devotion, and receiving in each other's presence the lessons of religion and morality, we tacitly acknowledge our mutual duties, and reciprocally pledge our-

selves to the observance of each other's rights. And though this circumstance, it must be admitted, does not afford complete security against injury, yet is there not reason to repose greater confidence in those with whom we statedly join in the exercises of public worship, than in those whose principles have never thus been manifested ?

Respect for public opinion is a principle of very powerful influence on human conduct; and it is a great recommendation of the institution of public worship, that it tends to engage the influence of this principle on the side of virtue. We all are actuated, more or less, by a desire to gain the esteem of others; and it is more, in general, by a regard to that object, than by any abstract principles of duty, that our passions are restrained and our conduct regulated. This regard for public opinion is a feeling so deeply implanted in our hearts, that it is in vain to attempt its total eradication; nor indeed is this to be desired, since it prompts in general to what is good, and under proper restraint and direction, may be made, if not itself virtuous, yet at least a step towards the attainment of virtue. The danger is, when

public opinion is formed, as sometimes happens, on erroneous principles;—when what is held in general estimation does not coincide with what is really estimable; in which case, by following this guide, we must necessarily be led astray. In such circumstances our only security consists in applying to a better source for our principles of conduct, and in arming ourselves with that firmness of mind which will enable us to follow those principles in defiance of the world's opinion. But since this high independence of mind is a quality rarely found and difficult to be acquired, it is important that a principle of such powerful influence on human conduct should be engaged as much as possible on the side of virtue; and for the accomplishment of this object, the institution of public worship affords the most effectual means. It serves to rectify public opinion. It tends to correct all false notions of virtue. It improves the moral judgment of the public, and furnishes juster rules, than would otherwise be established, for the estimation of character. The principles of sound morality, by being constantly inculcated in our religious assemblies, become, in a great degree, the standard of comparison, by which we form our judgment of one another.

Public opinion, being thus regulated, becomes a safer guide of conduct, and exerts its powerful influence more exclusively in promotion of genuine virtue. Can it be imagined, that those schools of religion and virtue, with which our favoured land abounds, and where such numbers regularly resort to be reminded of their high destiny, and to learn their various duties, tend not in any degree to refine the moral sentiments of the community, and to improve thereby the national character? Their influence indeed will be sufficiently manifest, if we revert to the manners of ancient times, or consider the state of morals in those existing nations which are destitute of these advantages. And much more manifest, doubtless, will be their salutary effects, when the observance of public worship shall become more general, and when the instructions of the pulpit shall be more exclusively employed in the inculcation of a sound morality.

It is a further important recommendation of public worship, that it offers the most certain and effectual means of drawing the attention of men to subjects of a moral and religious nature. The exercises of public worship are in some

measure attractive even to those who are insensible of their high importance; and a degree of credit in the opinion of the world attaches to those who regularly attend them. Numbers, consequently, from the power of habit, or from a regard to reputation, are thus led to receive moral and religious instruction, who would not seek it in any other way; and however unworthy may be the motive which brings them to the place of public worship, they can scarcely fail to derive some benefit from their attendance. Let it not then be urged that this institution is of no use, because the same instruction may be as effectually gained by reading and meditation in private. The question is,—is it probable that those exercises which are necessary to maintain the influence of religion in our hearts, would be observed so strictly and so generally as they are, if confined to the family circle or the closet of privacy? If private means of moral and religious improvement are often neglected even by those who attend with regularity upon the ordinances of public worship, is it reasonable to suppose that the abolition of the latter would be compensated by a more constant and general observance of the former? Or is there not rather reason to ap-

prehend that, without those moral instructions and good impressions which public worship is the means of furnishing, all, but the reflecting few, would be wholly destitute of the like advantages? With respect, indeed, to the poor and illiterate, this is not merely a probable, but a certain danger. To those who enjoy the requisite leisure and ability, it may be easy to compensate for the want of public moral instruction by study and meditation in private. But to the poor and labouring classes, the day of public worship is almost the only opportunity which their situation affords, for attending more expressly to their spiritual improvement. Occupied, as they are, during the course of the week in laborious employments, with little leisure for reading, and generally with little taste or ability for such an exercise, when or how would they ever chance to have their thoughts directed to the all-important subjects of religion and duty, if the means for this were not afforded by the services of the temple? This consideration is alone sufficient to prove the incalculable value of the institution, and to enforce upon every individual, whatever may be his talents and advantages, the obligation to observe it. For if we can have the vanity or

folly to imagine that no benefit can arise to ourselves from the exercises of public worship, yet let us remember how many there are, to whose moral improvement those exercises are indispensably necessary, and remembering this, let us be fearful of discouraging by our neglect, a practice so important to the cause of virtue, and so conducive to the welfare of human society.

SECTION II.

OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE, AND THE MEANS OF ATTAINING IT.

The knowledge of duty is not of itself sufficient to secure us from error; for it can evidently avail us little to know the rule by which our conduct should be regulated, unless we also know to what departures from that rule we are liable. And this we cannot know by attending merely to our external actions; for these, in themselves considered, may be perfectly allowable, while the motives from which they arise are highly culpable; or though they obviously, in the judgment of others, infringe the rule of duty, yet some plausible excuse, some ingenious artifice of self-deception, may conceal

from ourselves their guilty character. But even without the commission of actual crime, guilt, or at least the capability of guilt, may exist in slumbering passions, which circumstances may at any time rouse into ungovernable and pernicious action; and so long as evil desires or feelings are suffered to reside in our hearts, we can never be secure that they will not sometime lead, if they have not hitherto led, to crime and misery. Self-knowledge then is evidently not less necessary for the due regulation of our conduct, than the knowledge of duty in the abstract; and of the two it is certainly the more difficult acquirement. For so strong is the bias of self-partiality by which we are swayed in judging of ourselves, that few have candour or strengh of mind sufficient to admit the full extent of their own demerits. We have so many excuses for palliating what is faulty in our own conduct; so many plausible pretexts for disguising our real motives; so many subtleties to mislead us in forming an estimate of our own merits, that, of the character of any individual, no one in general is so bad a judge as that individual himself. Let us enter, then, into a more detailed consideration of the particular objects to which self-

knowledge relates, and of its particular uses in the government of conduct.

Self-knowledge, as the name imports, is the knowledge of all that distinguishes us as individuals. It has already been remarked, that to every individual belongs some peculiar modification or combination of the several propensities and affections of our nature, arising either from constitutional tendencies, or the influence of external circumstances, accidental impressions, and direct instruction. Self-knowledge, then, consists in our being well acquainted, not only with the passions and vices to which human nature in general is subject, but also with those peculiar modifications of these, which, from whatever cause, may belong to ourselves individually. The man who knows himself, knows his own constitutional temperament, and the errors or weaknesses to which he is from that cause liable; he knows the prepossessions and habits to which education and early impressions have rendered him subject; he knows the temptations to which his condition or circumstances peculiarly expose him; and what is a point of great importance, he knows the *relative strength* of all his passions, and is thus

enabled to foresee which will prevail, and which will yield, when they happen to interfere with one another. He is well acquainted, moreover, with his own abilities and attainments; he forms neither too high nor too low an estimate of them, but knows precisely their true value as compared with those of others, and is well aware for what he is competent, for what unfit; in what respects he is qualified to excel, and where he will find his powers deficient. Thus he knows his own strength and his own weakness; he knows where to provide against danger; where to suspect his judgment, where to mistrust his resolution. He knows in what cases he is subject to the delusions of passion and the bias of prejudice, and mistakes not the wrong suggestions of his own inclinations for the dictates of sober reason. He sees in their full amount, and under no disguise, the faults to which he is subject, and is as much aware of the good qualities which he wants, as of those which he possesses. But the nature of self-knowledge will more fully appear from considering its particular effects and uses.

Its first and most manifest effect is to produce *humility*, and thus to excite the desire of

improvement. Nothing but an intimate acquaintance with our own hearts will convince us of the full extent of our deficiencies. Our real motives are seldom so pure and elevated as self-partiality would fondly lead us to believe; and often, when we fancy that we are actuated by the best feelings,—by disinterested benevolence, by an impartial sense of justice, or by a pure regard to duty,—a stricter scrutiny of our hearts will reveal some selfish or sinister motive lurking beneath that fair disguise. Self-knowledge will make us sensible how much we are influenced by views of interest, or by a regard solely to the opinion of the world, in many even of our apparently most meritorious actions. It will convince us how small are the sacrifices we make to duty; how few and feeble the efforts we exert to resist the impulse of prevailing passions; and how much of what appears most laudable in our conduct is the result of natural disposition rather than deliberate choice. It will not only set in array before us all our more obvious transgressions; but will also drag from their concealment our secret faults, and display them before us in all their undisguised deformity. Such discoveries must tend, of course, to humble us, in our own

esteem, and humility is the first step to all moral improvement. For while we remain unconscious of our own defects, what inducement have we to make endeavours for the attainment of virtue? And without that just sense of the weakness and deceitfulness of the human heart, which only those can feel, who are accustomed to the task of self-inspection, what reason can we see to exercise that unremitted watchfulness and caution, without which no one can be secure from falling into frequent and serious errors? The best of men, be it observed, form no exception to the application of these remarks; for none in this imperfect state are free from numerous failings, and none in fact are so sensible of their defects, and so unfeignedly humbled in their own esteem, as they who stand highest in the scale of moral excellence. They have studied their duty more thoroughly than others; they have formed more correct and more elevated conceptions of virtue, and prescribed to themselves a more perfect model for the regulation of conduct: they only, therefore, are fully sensible what scope there is for amendment in even the best of men; and however superior they may be in virtue to the generality of mankind, yet, estimating themselves accord-

ing to that more perfect standard which they desire to reach, they find in themselves far greater defects than the world would blame them for, and abundant cause, notwithstanding their real pre-eminence, for deep humiliation, and unremitted watchfulness.* In the pursuit of moral, as in that of intellectual improvement, conceit is felt only by those of slender attainments, who, because their views are contracted by ignorance, imagine they have almost reached the utmost limits of possible improvement; while they who have made the greatest proficiency, sensible of the boundless extent of what yet lies before them, are ever the most ready to confess that their attainments are nothing in comparison of what yet remains to be attained.

But in order effectually to guard against error, something more is evidently requisite than that caution and vigilance which arise from a sense of our own infirmities. Our most anxious care to avoid guilt will be of little avail, unless it be directed to its proper objects. A *tender* conscience is not necessarily an *enlightened* one; and instances are not unfrequent of men who are sincerely desirous of acting right,

* Note Z.

but whose conscientious scrupulosity evinces itself only in the strict observance of some external ceremony or minor duty, and leaves their prevailing passions to domineer in their hearts without restraint. Nay more, we have heard of men whose sense of duty has even been enlisted on the side of those very passions which it ought to have restrained, and who, because "they knew not what manner of spirit they were of," have mistaken the dictates of a sanguinary bigotry for the voice of duty and the commands of God. Herein then we see a further very important benefit of self-knowledge, in that, by instructing us as to the precise nature and strength of the several passions to which we are subject, it enables us so to direct our vigilance and our efforts as to render them effectual to our real improvement. It acquaints us beforehand with the dangers we are exposed to, and puts us better on our guard against them. It shows us where our strength and where our weakness lies; where security and confidence may be safely felt, and where the strictest guard must be maintained to secure us from error. *To be prepared for temptation before its arrival*, is our only effectual security against it, and the great object which we should

ever keep in view in all our plans and exercises of self-discipline. When temptation presents itself unforeseen and unexpected, we are apt to be surprised into guilty compliance, before those reflections have occurred to our minds, which would have awakened our virtuous fears, and summoned our better principles to our aid. But knowing beforehand the danger we are about to meet; foreseeing that, in certain circumstances which are about to occur, some evil passion is likely to be excited, or some weakness will cause us to shrink from our duty, we have then an opportunity either of avoiding the danger, if it be such as we may avoid, or of previously fortifying ourselves with good resolutions, and reasoning ourselves into that frame of mind which will best prepare us for the encounter. This, it is evident, can only be done by those who are thoroughly acquainted with their own hearts, and who, by this means, are fully aware of the errors to which they are liable.

It is not, however, only by thus forewarning us of our danger, that self-knowledge secures us against the influence of temptation. Still more effectually it contributes to this end, *by*

guarding us against those artifices of self-delusion, from which temptation derives its greatest power. It strips off all those specious disguises by which we seek to hide the deformity of our vices. It exposes and defeats all those subtle wiles by means of which our passions mislead our judgment. It teaches us not to rest satisfied with our performance of duties which are rendered easy by their consonance with our natural temper, while we neglect all those which require for their performance the painful sacrifice of loved enjoyments, or the strenuous resistance of prevailing passions. If we have fondly persuaded ourselves that a life of folly and dissipation is atoned for by some few transitory feelings and occasional acts of generosity; if we have claimed for ourselves the merit of disinterested benevolence, when our real motive was the thirst of fame; if we have substituted the outward observances of religion in the room of its inward spirit, or disguised our narrow bigotry and party feelings under the fair appearance of a zeal for truth; by whatever method, in short, we may have contrived to favour our prevailing passions without doing open violence to our sense of duty, self-knowledge will defeat the artifice and banish the dangerous delusion. It

will reveal our vices to us in their true light, and teach us to call them by their right names. It will lead us to be on our guard against the first approaches of temptation, and to check the beginnings of evil desire. By forewarning us, in short, of every snare, and exposing every seduction, it will equally secure us from being hurried into error by surprise, or betrayed by the deceitfulness of our own hearts.

The knowledge, moreover, of our weaknesses and passions is not only useful in enabling us to guard against those particular acts of misconduct to which they render us liable: it is in some measure efficacious in correcting the evil at its source, by altering those habits of feeling and thinking in which our weaknesses and passions consist. It has already been remarked, that every vicious disposition arises from some false estimate of good or evil; from some erroneous conception or groundless phantasm of imagination; from some hope or fear disproportioned to the real nature of its exciting object. Now it is obvious that the first thing requisite to enable us to correct such false conceptions or erroneous judgments, is to know in what circumstances, and in regard to what

objects, we are liable to entertain them. This knowledge, I admit, will not at once emancipate us from their influence; will not at once reverse the habitual tendency of our feelings; will not on a sudden erase the deep impressions of education, or change the nature of our constitutional temperament. Though in the hour of calm reflection we may be fully sensible of our weakness, and may see and admit with full conviction the fallaciousness of the feelings which have formerly misled us, yet on every return of the occasions or circumstances which usually excite our passions, we shall still be liable to the same delusions. Much, however, is gained, *if we know when to suspect the truth of our conceptions.* This will render us cautious of yielding ourselves on such occasions to the impulse of our feelings, and instruct us to make allowance for that delusive colouring with which the medium of passion tinges our views. It will lead us to endeavour to recall to our minds the views and reflections of our calmer moments, and thus to reason ourselves into a better frame. Such endeavours resolutely and perseveringly exerted cannot fail to produce in some measure the desired effect. The objects which deluded us, will at length appear at all

times in their true colours. Phantoms of mistaken hope and fear will no more mislead us. Reason will be established on her rightful throne, and her dictates will guide us to virtue and happiness.

Besides these more important effects of self-knowledge, there are some other benefits resulting from it, which, though of a subordinate nature, yet deserve to be mentioned.

It produces *propriety of behaviour*. They who know not the exact nature and extent of their own qualifications, are ever in danger of transgressing the bounds of propriety, by aiming at what is peculiarly unsuitable to their character; by pushing themselves forward into situations for which they are unfit; by affecting manners which are not natural to them, or by laying claim to merits which none but themselves can discern; and thus they make themselves ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of all observers. The man who truly knows himself, knows precisely the nature of his own qualifications and the extent of his own abilities. He knows exactly the part which belongs to him, and the behaviour which is most suitable

to his condition and character. He never, therefore, commits the error of stepping beyond his province. He never attempts what he is not fit for; never assumes what does not belong to him; never acts inconsistently with his proper character. This propriety of conduct adds lustre to the more important virtues, and renders a man, whatever be his station or abilities, useful and respectable as a member of society.

Self-knowledge, lastly, is the most effectual means of attaining the *knowledge of human nature* in general. A man's own heart is the only one to which he can have complete access for observation. Here he has a little world within himself which lies continually open to his inspection. Here he has a perfect specimen of his race, which he may study every hour with fresh improvement. There is, indeed, a certain knowledge of human nature, more talked of, but less valuable, which is merely the result of long and extensive intercourse with the world. This, however, consists in little more than an acquaintance with the mere externals of human nature;—with its most obvious and worst features. It is the knowledge of the vices and the tricks of men;—a kind of know-

ledge, which, of itself, can have no other effect than to create dispositions of misanthropy, suspicion, selfishness, and cunning. I grant that an intercourse with the world is necessary for attaining a complete knowledge of mankind. But be it remembered, we are not prepared to enter upon this field of observation, till after we have acquired the knowledge of our own hearts. The habit of attending to our own qualities will sharpen our attention to the qualities of others, and enable us to catch those nicer shades of character which escape the notice of the superficial observer. Accustomed to scrutinize our own motives, we shall acquire discernment to penetrate into the motives of others. Skilled in detecting the subtle artifices of our own hearts, we shall more easily see through the same disguises in others. But as self-knowledge cannot be attained without the exercise of *candour*, this disposition, as applied to others, will render us as observant of their *good*, as of their *evil* qualities: so that the knowledge of human nature which is thus acquired, will be of a far more just and liberal kind than that which is derived solely from an extensive intercourse with men. Instead of affording matter for satirical remark or misan-

thropic feelings, it will increase our love of mankind, by convincing us that, whatever there may be of evil, there is more of good among them. Instead of rendering us selfish, suspicious, and cunning, it will tend to promote in various ways our moral improvement. That enlightened observation of human character, to which it will lead, will sharpen and improve the moral sense, and add continually fresh strength to our virtuous principles. The virtues which we observe and admire, will incite us to imitation. The vices of which we witness the miserable consequences, will operate upon us as a warning lesson. Our observations of mankind, reflected back upon ourselves, will show us our own characters in a clearer light; and thus the study of our own hearts will both assist and be assisted by that noblest of all studies which can engage the mind of man.

Such being the nature, and such the important uses of self-knowledge, let us now consider the means of attaining it. These means, it is obvious, consist solely in the constant exercise of a rigorous, impartial, and enlightened Self-Examination; and I know no better counsel to offer on this subject, than that which was

inculcated as a sacred rule on the disciples of the Samian sage, and to which so many moralists, ancient and modern, have added their approving sanction.

Ere gentle slumbers on thine eyelids fall,
Pause, and each action of the day recall;
From first to last its varied scenes run o'er,
And thus the secrets of thy breast explore:
"How have I us'd this added day of life?
Where have I yielded in temptation's strife?
What have I done, that well may bear review?
What left undone, that duty bade me do?"
Then if remembrance aught of folly show,
Let bitter tears of just contrition flow:
But if it tell of moments wisely spent,
Calm thou may'st slumber, with thyself content.*

To this evening task of retrospection should be added the corresponding exercise of morning preparation, in which we should seriously apply ourselves to consider the coming duties and probable temptations of the day, and fortify our minds with earnest resolutions to avoid the transgressions and repair the neglects of former days. It will be useful also to take, at certain longer intervals of time, a more extensive survey of our past conduct; and to consider

* From the Golden Verses of Pythagoras.

what progress we have made in the attainment of virtue; what changes may have taken place in our character or condition; what new temptations may now beset us, to which we were not formerly subject; what fresh duties may now demand our care, which former circumstances did not impose. Be it, however, carefully observed, that the duty of self-examination is not one which is to be performed only on stated occasions:—it is the business of almost every moment. Our attention must be ever on the alert to watch the movements of our own hearts; to detect the motives which secretly actuate us, and to explore the source of all our varying emotions. And the nature of this duty will accordingly be best explained by pointing out the several particulars which should be made the objects of attention and inquiry, whether on occasions accidentally arising, or at times more expressly appropriated to the task.

1. A principal object of inquiry, in every general examination of our own hearts, should be *the nature of that happiness to which our fondest wishes and governing views are directed.* We have all some leading object of desire,

which we look forward to with longing hearts, as the termination of our cares and labours; some fancied state of bliss, for which we sigh as the haven of our hopes and the consummation of our happiness. With the ambitious, it is some station of power or eminence: with the covetous, it is some amount of riches: with the indolent, it is the opportunity of abandoning all arduous labours, and of resigning themselves without molestation or anxiety to the enjoyment of their ease. The nature of the happiness which thus forms the object of our most constant and fervent wishes, is evidently a direct and plain criterion of our prevailing dispositions.

2. A second important object of inquiry conducive to the knowledge of ourselves, is to ascertain our *besetting sins*. The dispositions which prevail most strongly in our minds will generally manifest themselves most plainly in our conduct. By considering, therefore, what kind of errors we most frequently commit; what kind of temptation most commonly misleads us, and overcomes all other motives, we shall be guided immediately and certainly to the knowledge of our ruling passion.

3. A third subject of inquiry, of great importance, is the degree of *effort* which we have exerted in the regulation of our conduct, and *in what parts of our duty that effort has been most required.* It has already been remarked as the result of that variety which exists in the characters of men, that some are prompt in the performance of duties which others cannot practise without painful effort, and prone, on the other hand, to the commission of offences, to which others are not in the least degree tempted. It has been shown how wide a field this opens for self-deception;—how apt we are to make a compromise between our inclinations and our duty, by pleading our practice of those virtues which are easy, as an excuse for our want of those which are difficult;—how prone also to draw unfair comparisons between ourselves and others, by confining our view to those points in which we find them inferior to ourselves, without considering their different character, their different temptations, or their superiority to ourselves in other respects. There is no method of guarding against this kind of self-delusion, but that of attending to the relative degrees of effort or facility with which we perform our several duties. For every one

must be sensible that there is no great merit in following his natural inclination. The true test of merit is *the pains which we take to do our duty.* For no one is favoured by nature with such a well-poised temper as to have no wrong inclinations of any kind to contend with: and the very first step in the course of virtue, the very first impulse of a mind awakened to the desire of moral improvement, is to oppose that evil habit, or passion, whatever it be, to which we find ourselves subject. Whoever, therefore, is conscious of having made no effort in the regulation of his conduct, with respect to him it may certainly be concluded, not merely that he is chargeable with guilt of some kind, which is the case with every human being, but that he has never even attempted to avoid the guilt with which he is chargeable. And if he has thus yielded to every temptation, if he has thus resigned himself to every impulse, he has clearly no other title to merit than what consists in his exemption from vices to which he has felt no inclination; and though his natural disposition or his circumstances in life may have been such as to save him from those offences which affix a stigma on the character, I see not what right he has to value himself in moral worth above the

most abandoned of mankind.* By attending, therefore, to the degree of effort which our fancied virtues have cost us, we shall not only ascertain the bent of our natural inclinations, but find an antidote against those flattering delusions, which are the greatest of all obstructions to moral improvement. It should be observed, moreover, that a difference in the degree of facility or effort experienced in the performance of particular duties, is found not only in different individuals, but in the same individual, in different periods or circumstances of life. The same temptations which mislead us in youth, have no charms to allure us in more advanced life; and a more sudden change of circumstances sometimes deprives us of the power or opportunity of committing faults, which previously, by our own resolution, we were unable to avoid. Here again an occasion is afforded us for self-deception, and we fail not to set down to the score of our own merit, an apparent amendment, which is owing solely to a change of external circumstances,—thus verifying that common but very just remark, that "when our vices leave us, we flatter ourselves that we leave them." Whenever, therefore,

* See Aikin's Letters to his Son. Vol. II. Letter 3.

we find, that any vicious propensity to which we were lately subject, appears no more to influence our conduct, we should pay particular attention to the inquiry respecting effort, carefully endeavouring to ascertain whether it be, that, through a change in our circumstances, and consequently in our temptations, our vice has left us, or we, by our virtuous resolution, have abandoned our vice.

4. A fourth important inquiry conducive to self-knowledge, is that which relates to the *secret motives* of our actions. Every one who is not altogether unused to reflection, must be well aware that he has often been influenced by motives, the true nature of which he did not perceive at the moment of action, and which in some instances he has afterwards found to have been directly the reverse of those by which he fancied himself influenced. It may, however, be observed, that, notwithstanding the deep subtlety of the human heart, self-deception in such cases is seldom so complete, as not to leave room for some secret misgivings, which, if not too quickly suppressed by our self-partiality, would lead us to suspect that we are not so meritorious as we imagine. At least we cannot, I

believe, in these circumstances enjoy that pure and unmixed satisfaction, which a perfect assurance of the rectitude of our motives will always inspire. If we would thoroughly know our own hearts, let these misgivings be never suppressed, but regarded always with particular attention. Let them prompt us to the most rigorous scrutiny of our hearts, and let no apprehension of the unpleasant truths we may discover, pervert our judgment, or cause us to shrink from the investigation.

5. As we sometimes *act* without precisely knowing the motives of our actions, so we not unfrequently *feel emotions*, the true source of which is not immediately obvious; and it is therefore equally important to the acquisition of self-knowledge *to attend to our varying humours and to ascertain their source.* Envy, hatred, pride, and vanity are passions which are seldom seen in their true light by those who are under their influence; and from the gratification or disappointment of these passions, feelings of triumph or vexation frequently arise, the cause of which we cannot, or do not trouble ourselves to explain. Whenever, therefore, our spirits are elevated with gladness, we should

do well to pause awhile, in order to reflect on the cause of our emotions;—to ask ourselves what is the passion that has been gratified, or what the nature of that real or imagined good, the attainment or expectation of which thus gladdens our heart. Is it the misfortune of an enemy?—the disgrace of a rival?—or the humiliation of one who claimed superiority over us? Is it the fond idea that we are regarded by others with admiration, or the high opinion which we have conceived of ourselves from some discovered or fancied excellence? When, too, we are depressed with melancholy, or tormented with vexation, we should in like manner inquire, what is the nature of that evil which we dread, of those desires or hopes which have been frustrated, or of that calamity or injury which we have sustained. The strict and candid prosecution of such inquiries will often reveal the secret envy, pride, or vanity of our hearts, and prompt us thus to restrain the feelings, to whose evil impulse we should otherwise have yielded without resistance.

6. It will, further, afford us assistance in the examination of our own hearts, *to pay attention*

to the sentiments of others respecting us, particularly to the sentiments of our *enemies*. Society is that moral mirror which alone can enable us to view ourselves as with the eyes of other people;* and as it is by means of it that every one is led originally to contemplate the features of his own character, which otherwise would never have been an object of his attention, so it is necessary that he should continue to consult it, in order to impress them more deeply on his mind. Others, it is true, are liable to misjudge us; but far less so than we are liable to misjudge ourselves: and though we may certainly err in paying too much regard to their opinions, that extreme self-confidence which entirely disregards them, is at once the cause, the effect, and the sure indication, of profound self-ignorance. No man can truly appreciate himself, who is not sensibly alive to the sentiments of others respecting him; who does not frequently transfer himself in fancy into the situation of his observers, and endeavour to view his character in the same impartial light in which it is viewed by them. The sentiments even of hostile observers are not unworthy of attention; for though they may

* See Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments. Part III. Ch. 1.

regard us with prejudice, and unjustly aggravate our faults, their censure will seldom be entirely without foundation, and will generally afford us a better criterion of ourselves than the partial sentiments of our friends, who often do but aid and confirm the testimony of our own too flattering judgment.

In order, however, to render these means of acquiring self-knowledge completely effectual, it is necessary to aid them by the constant employment of those other means of self-improvement which have been heretofore mentioned. The study of morality, when regularly pursued, will constantly present to our attention a model of excellence which will become our criterion in estimating our own attainments; and it is obvious that the more we impress the idea of this model upon our minds, the less shall we be in danger of overlooking our defects, or overrating our virtues. Without this, we shall hardly be able to avoid being misled, in the formation of our moral principles, by the bias of our natural dispositions; but instead of aiming to reach that elevated standard of excellence, which a just system of morality would present, we shall bring down our standard to

the level of our own character, and thus judging of ourselves by a defective criterion, we shall inevitably judge too favourably. It deserves also to be observed that, though self-inspection is the direct and immediate means of acquiring self-knowledge, yet the frequent perusal of such books as treat of the various qualities of human character, of the passions, weaknesses, and subtleties of the human heart, must greatly assist us in the exercise of self-inspection, by sharpening our attention to all indications of character, and cautioning us against the delusions by which we are apt to be misled. The exercises of devotion contribute to the same end in a different way; for the solemn conviction which they impress upon our minds, that we are ever in the presence of that great Being, to whom the inmost recesses of our hearts lie open, must surely tend to render us anxious that our own scrutiny may be not less searching, nor less impartial, than his.

The great object of all these means of self-improvement is to make the idea of duty habitually present to the mind, and to render the moral principle completely predominant over every other affection of our hearts. In this

object there is certainly nothing which the most sober reason, enlightened by a just knowledge of the laws of human conduct, does not approve as practicable. A subject which is thus daily presented to our serious attention, must necessarily become familiar to our thoughts, and, being familiar, cannot fail to have an influence upon our conduct. The repeated failure of our good resolutions may sometimes discourage us in our efforts to improve, and tempt us to believe that our evil passions and propensities are entirely beyond our power to control: yet every day's experience shows that they may be controlled, provided only an adequate motive be presented. How often do we, in the presence of those whose good opinion we are anxious to conciliate, suppress emotions, to which in other circumstances we should have yielded without the least resistance! The man of choleric temper, whose angry passions break forth unchecked among his own family and dependants, may plead perhaps in his own excuse that he is carried away by an irresistible impulse; yet how easily does he pause in the very tempest of his fury, whenever the presence of a more formidable observer imposes a restraint not felt before. Nothing seems a

more difficult task than voluntarily to undergo great bodily pain, or entirely to suppress those external manifestations, which it naturally extorts: yet how many instances does history record, of persons who, solely from a sense of honour, have borne with composure or apparent indifference, the utmost extremities of torture. If a sense of honour or propriety can thus overcome the strongest impulses of nature, why should it be thought a hopeless attempt, so to cultivate the moral principle, as to give it somewhat of the same predominance. The moral principle is a certain affection of the mind, which, like all other affections, arises from certain views, conceptions, or associations, of good or evil. Let the proper conceptions be presented to the mind, and kept distinctly and steadily in its view, and the corresponding affection must necessarily follow; for we cannot do otherwise than choose and love whatever we clearly perceive to be the means of happiness. If, then, virtue be indeed our highest interest, it only requires to be thoroughly known, in order to be valued beyond all other objects.* This thorough knowledge of virtue is not, it is true, to be soon or easily acquired;

* Note Aa.

but the more we approximate to it, by the assiduous study of our duty, the more we must remove ourselves beyond the liability to error. Occasional failures we must experience, because we cannot at once divest ourselves of wrong propensities, nor acquire at once that full, and clear, and ever-present apprehension of our duty, which is required to counteract them. But let us never be discouraged: let us never cease or relax our efforts: let every failure only serve to incite us to more careful vigilance and more determined resolutions; and though we may never attain entire exemption from error, we cannot fail to add by this means continually fresh strength to the principle of duty, and thus to advance, from day to day, to higher and yet higher degrees of moral improvement.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

TO THE

Second Volume.

Note A. p. 13.

"When a firm decisive spirit is recognised, it is curious to see how the space clears around a man, and leaves him room and freedom. The disposition to interrogate, dictate, or banter, preserves a respectful and politic distance, judging it not unwise to keep the peace with a person of so much energy. A conviction that he understands and that he wills with extraordinary force, silences the conceit that intended to perplex or instruct him. There is a feeling, as in respect of Fate, that the decrees of so inflexible a spirit *must* be right, or that, at least, they *will* be accomplished."

Foster's Essay on Decision of Character. Letter i.

Note B. p. 15.

"It is inevitable that the regulation of every man's plan must greatly depend on the course of events, which come in an order not to be foreseen or prevented. But even in accommodating the plans of conduct to the train of events, the difference between two men may be no less than that in the one instance the man is subservient to the events, and in the other the events are made subservient to the man. Some men seem to have been taken along by a succession of events, and, as it were, handed

forward in quiet passiveness from one to another, without any determined principle in their own characters, by which they could constrain those events to serve a design formed antecedently to them, or apparently in defiance of them. Others, advancing through life with an internal, invincible determination of mind, have seemed to make the train of circumstances, whatever they were, conduce as much to their chief design as if they had taken place on purpose. It is wonderful how even the apparent casualties of life seem to bow to a spirit that will not bow to them, and yield to assist a design, after having in vain attempted to frustrate it."

Foster's Essay on Decision of Character. Letter i.

NOTE C. p. 29.

"When this character is dignified by wisdom and principle, great care is yet required in the possessors of it to prevent it from becoming unamiable. As it involves much practical assertion of superiority over other human beings, the manner ought to be as mild and conciliating as possible; else pride will feel provoked, affection hurt, and weakness oppressed. But this is not the manner which the man whom I am considering, will be naturally most inclined to wear. Rather, he will have a manner of sternness, reserve, and incompliance. He will have the appearance of keeping himself always at a distance from social equality; and his friends will feel as if their friendship were continually sliding into subserviency, while his intimate connexions will think he does not attach the due importance either to their opinions or to their regard. His manner, when they differ from him, or complain, will be in danger of giving the impression of careless inattention, and sometimes of disdain.

"When he can accomplish a design in his own person alone, he may separate himself to the work with the cold self-inclosed individuality on which no one has any hold, which seems to recognise no kindred being in the world, which takes little account of good wishes and kind concern, any more than it cares for opposition, which seeks neither aid nor sympathy, and which seems to say, I do not want any of you, and I am glad that I do not; leave

me alone to succeed or die. This has a very repellent effect on the friends who wished to feel themselves of some importance, in some way or other, to a person whom they are constrained to respect. When assistance is indispensable to his undertakings, his mode of signifying it will seem rather to command the co-operation than to invite it.

"In consultation, his manner will indicate that when he is equally with the rest in possession of the circumstances of the case, he does not at all expect to hear any opinions that shall correct his own, but is satisfied that either his own conception of the subject is the just one, or that his own mind must originate that which shall be so. This striking difference will be apparent between him and his associates, that *their* manner of receiving *his* opinions is that of agreement or dissent; *his* manner of receiving *theirs* is that of sanction or rejection. He has the tone of authoritatively deciding on what they say, but never of submitting to decision what himself says. Their coincidence with his views does not give him a firmer assurance of his being right, nor their dissent any other impression than that of their incapacity to judge. If his feeling took the distinct form of a reflection, it would be, Mine is the business of comprehending and devising, and I am here to rule this company, and not to consult them; I want their docility and not their arguments; I am come, not to seek their co-operation in thinking, but to induce their concurrence in executing what is already thought for them. Of course many suggestions and reasons which appear important to those from whom they come, will be disposed of by him with a transient attention, or a light facility, that will seem very disrespectful to persons who possibly hesitate to admit the full persuasion that he is a demi-god, and that they are but insects. * * * * If full scope be given to these tendencies, they will make even a man of elevated virtue a tyrant, who, in the consciousness of the right intention, and the assurance of the wise contrivance, of his designs, will hold himself justified in being regardless of every thing but the accomplishment of them. He will forget all respect for the feelings and liberties of beings who are to be regarded as but a subordi-

nate machinery, to be actuated, or to be thrown aside when not actuated, by the spring of his commanding spirit."

Foster's Essay on Decision of Character. Letter v.

NOTE D. p. 33.

"Martin Luther, an Augustin friar, professor in the university of Wittemberg, resenting the affront put upon his order, began to preach against these abuses in the sale of indulgences: *and being naturally of a fiery temper, and provoked by opposition,* he proceeded even to decry indulgences themselves; and was thence carried, by the heat of dispute, to question the authority of the pope, from which his adversaries derived their chief authorities against him. Still as he enlarged his reading, in order to support these tenets, he discovered some new abuse or error in the church of Rome; and finding his opinions greedily hearkened to, he promulgated them by writing, discourse, sermon, conference, and daily increased the number of his disciples. All Saxony, all Germany, all Europe, were in a very little time filled with the voice of this daring innovator; and men, roused from that lethargy in which they had so long slept, began to call in question the most ancient and most received opinions. The elector of Saxony, favourable to Luther's doctrine, protected him from the violence of the papal jurisdiction. The republic of Zuric even reformed their church according to the new model. Many sovereigns of the empire, and the Imperial diet itself, showed a favourable disposition towards it. And Luther, a man naturally inflexible, vehement, opinionative, was become incapable, either from promises of advancement or terrors of severity, to relinquish a sect of which he was himself the founder, and *which brought him a glory superior to all others, the glory of dictating the religious faith and principles of multitudes.*"

Hume's History of England. Chap. xxix.

NOTE E. p. 36.

"The English seminary at Rheims had wrought themselves up to a high pitch of rage and animosity against the queen. The recent persecutions from which they had escaped; the new

rigours which they knew awaited them in the course of their missions ; the liberty which for the present they enjoyed of declaiming against that princess ; and the contagion of that religious fury which every where surrounded them in France :—all these causes had obliterated with them every maxim of common sense, and every principle of morals and humanity. Intoxicated with admiration of the divine power and infallibility of the pope, they revered his bull, by which he excommunicated and deposed the queen ; and some of them had gone to that height of extravagance as to assert, that that performance had been immediately dictated by the Holy Ghost. The assassination of heretical sovereigns, and of that princess in particular, was represented as the most meritorious of all enterprises ; and they taught, that whoever perished in such pious attempts enjoyed without dispute the glorious and never-fading crown of martyrdom."

Hume's History of England. Chap. xlii.

NOTE F. p. 38.

" Of this we may be sure," says Gibbon, speaking of the controversy between the Greek and Latin churches, respecting the procession of the Holy Ghost, " that neither side could be convinced by the arguments of their opponents. Prejudice may be enlightened by reason, and a superficial glance may be rectified by a clear and more perfect view of an object adapted to our faculties ; but the bishops and monks had been taught from their infancy to repeat a form of mysterious words ; *their national and personal honour depended on the repetition of the same sounds ; and their narrow minds were hardened and inflamed by the acrimony of a public dispute.*"

History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Ch. lxvi.

NOTE G. p. 41.

The following is the observation of a sagacious historian respecting the character of Mary, queen of England.

" Naturally of a sour and obstinate temper, and irritated by contradiction and misfortunes, she possessed all the qualities fitted to compose a bigot ; and her extreme ignorance rendered

her utterly incapable of doubt in her own belief, or of indulgence to the opinions of others."

Hume's History of England. Chap. xxxvi.

NOTE H. p. 47.

"Doubts and difficulties have often perplexed me, and thrown a cloud over truths which, in the general course of my life, are my support and consolation. There are, however, many truths, the conviction of which I never lose. One conviction in particular remains with me amidst all fluctuations of temper and spirits; I mean my belief of the maxim of my text, that *he who walketh uprightly, walketh surely*. There has not been a moment in which I have found it possible to doubt, whether the wisest and best course I can take is to practise virtue and to avoid guilt. Low spirits only give new force to this conviction, and cause it to make a deeper impression. Uncertainty in other instances *creates* certainty here; for the more dark and doubtful our state under God's government is, the more prudent it must be to chuse that course which is the *safest*."

Dr. Price's Sermon on the Security of a Virtuous Course.

NOTE I. p. 56.

"The attachment which is founded upon the love of virtue, as it is certainly, of all attachments, the most virtuous, so it is likewise the happiest, as well as the most permanent and secure. Such friendships need not be confined to a single person, but may safely embrace all the wise and virtuous with whom we have been long and intimately acquainted, and upon whose virtue and wisdom we can, upon that account, entirely depend. They who would confine friendship to two persons, seem to confound the wise security of friendship with the jealousy and folly of love."

Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments. Pt. vi. *Sec.* ii. *ch.* i.

NOTE K. p. 107.

The danger of a general toleration of suicide is surely much

exaggerated by Paley, when he says that the effect of it would be "the affliction of *many* families and the consternation of *all*: for mankind must live in continual alarm for the fate of their friends and dearest relations, when the restraints of religion and morality are withdrawn; when every disgust which is powerful enough to tempt men to suicide, shall be deemed sufficient to justify it; and when the follies and vices, as well as the inevitable calamities, of human life, so often make existence a burden." *(Paley's Moral Philosophy. Book* II. *ch.* 3.)—Suicide is opposed by such powerful propensities, that, whatever be the prevailing opinion respecting its guilt or innocence, it can never become so frequent as is here supposed.

NOTE L. p. 159.

No writer has carried this doctrine respecting causation to such a length as the latter of those to whom I have referred; for he maintains that not only the phænomena of matter, but the phænomena of mind also are connected in no other way, so far as our knowledge extends, than by the relation of invariable antecedence and consequence. "That we can know the phænomena," he observes, "only as far as we have attended to their sequences, and that, without experiment, therefore, it would have been impossible for us to *predict* any of their successions, is equally true in mind as in matter. * * Our various feelings *similar* or *dissimilar*, *kindred* or *discordant*, are all *mere states of the mind*; and there is nothing in any *one* state of the mind, *considered in itself*, which, necessarily, involves the *succession of any other state of mind*. That *particular state*, for example, which constitutes the *mere feeling of pain*, instead of being attended by that *different state*, which constitutes the *desire of being freed from pain*, might have continued, as one uniform feeling, or might have ceased, and been succeeded by some other state, though in the original *adaptation* of our mental frames, by that Creator's wisdom which planned the sequences of its phænomena, the *particular affection*, which constitutes *desire*, had *not been* one of the innumerable *varieties of affection*, of which the mind was for ever to be susceptible." *(Brown's Lectures on the*

Philosophy of the Human Mind. Lecture X. *Vol.* I. *p.* 211, 212.] According to this doctrine, then, the feeling of pain has no necessary influence in producing a dislike towards the object which excites it; but might have been followed, had it so pleased the Author of our being, by the love and desire of that object. I know not how this may appear to others; but to me, I must say, it appears a very glaring absurdity. It is essential, I conceive, to the nature of pain to create a desire of escaping from it, and a dislike to the object which occasions it. This desire and this dislike are, indeed, almost identical with the perception of pain; and to say that they might have succeeded or been connected with a pleasurable feeling, is little short of a contradiction in terms. However limited may be our knowledge of causation in the operations of external nature, it is assuredly, with respect to the operations of mind, something more than the mere observance of a certain invariable conjunction of events. We know not, indeed, the primary cause of our sensations, nor the mode in which our volitions act upon the muscles of the body; but the laws of association which govern the operations of memory and judgment; the influence of pleasure and pain in generating our affections; and the connexion between virtue and happiness, vice and misery, are instances in which cause and effect are connected, not by arbitrary appointment, but by a necessity which admits not the conception of their being disjoined. Nor is the doctrine in question to be unreservedly admitted even with respect to the phænomena of the material world. At least it may be considered as giving a very partial and confined view of the real amount of our knowledge of causation. 'Tis true we cannot trace the phænomena of nature to their primary causes. In every investigation we find ourselves stopped at some general fact, of which no other account can be given than that such is the law of nature; and it is customary to say that we have shown the cause of a particular phænomenon, when we have merely referred it to that more general law of which it is an instance. But though we cannot explain the general law, we can at least perceive in many instances a necessary connexion between the general law, and the particular fact which we explain by means

of it. When, for instance, Sir Isaac Newton explained, in so beautiful and satisfactory a manner, the phænomenon of the rainbow; he did no more than refer it to the general law of refraction; and though this law was left by him, and still remains, a mystery, the deduction from it of the phænomenon in question is built upon mathematical demonstration. In like manner, the unequal motion of the planets in their elliptical orbits is clearly a necessary consequence of the combined operation of the gravitating and projectile forces, though the cause of these forces is altogether hidden from us. In the case of motion communicated by mechanical impulse, we are apt to think that there is nothing which requires any explanation. It is maintained, however, by some, and in particular by the writer before referred to, that even in this case, our knowledge of causation amounts to nothing more than a knowledge of the constant sequence of certain events. A ball in motion strikes another ball, and the motion of the latter, with a certain force and in a certain direction, ensues; and this, they affirm, is all that we really know upon the subject. But they mistake, I think, the proper subject of our ignorance. The laws of motion are a necessary result of the impenetrability and vis inertiæ of matter. Of the cause of these properties we are ignorant, because we are ignorant of the nature of matter itself; but being assumed, the laws of motion are deduced from them by mathematical demonstration. In this opinion I am happy to find myself supported by Professor Scott, in his "*Inquiry into the limits and peculiar objects of Physical and Metaphysical Science.*" "I conceive," says he, "that the three laws of motion which are of so extensive and important application in mechanics, are nothing more than an accurate and detailed enunciation of the direct results of that characteristic property of matter, which is called *inertness*. This property being assumed as true, these laws are its necessary consequences; and all the numerous particular applications of these laws, in order to explain the various phænomena of motion, its composition and resolution, its uniform, accelerated, and retarded state, are in like manner necessary consequences of this essential property o matter. These consequences are in the strictest sense of the

word *necessary*; for it is well known that they are deduced in the very form and language of mathematical demonstration, from premises which, if the above investigation be just, are nothing other than an assumption of the *inertia* of matter; a quality, which, when rightly understood, includes its *passiveness*, its *mobility*, and also its *resistance* or *reaction*.

"Thus then the phænomena of *impulse*, the immediate object of our investigation, are strictly and mathematically deducible from two characteristic properties which our experience informs us are to be found alike in all kinds of matter, *impenetrability* and *inertness*. These being assumed, the various laws of impulse, at least in the case of non-elastic bodies, follow as necessary consequences, and are proved in the very form of mathematical demonstration. The only thing, therefore, that is not clearly understood by the philosopher in the phænomena of impulse, is the nature or essence of these inherent properties of matter. If we ask, what is impenetrability, and what is inertness? I do not know that any satisfactory answer can be given. These are ultimate facts, and objects of experience, which cannot be explained by any thing simpler than themselves."—p. 208, 209.

Note M. p. 170.

To those who consider the doctrines of Mr. Malthus as presenting an insuperable difficulty in the economy of divine Providence, I would strongly recommend an attentive perusal of that chapter in his justly celebrated Essay, which treats of the checks to population in Norway, (Book II. ch. 1,) where will be found abundant evidence of the truth of the assertion in the text, that the evil arising from the law of population is entirely within our power to obviate, and actually is obviated, without the instrumentality of either vice or misery. The following extracts are so important in their bearing upon the question, that I make no apology for transcribing them.

"The peculiar state of Norway throws very strong obstacles in the way of early marriages. There are no large manufacturing towns to take off the overflowing population of the country; and as each village naturally furnishes from itself a supply of hands

more than equal to the demand, a change of place in search of work seldom promises any success. Unless therefore an opportunity of foreign emigration offer, the Norwegian peasant generally remains in the village in which he was born; and as the vacancies in houses and employments must occur very slowly, owing to the small mortality that takes place, he will often see himself compelled to wait a considerable time before he can attain a situation which will enable him to rear a family.

"The Norway farms have in general a certain number of married labourers employed upon them, in proportion to their size, who are called housemen. They receive from the farmer a house, and a quantity of land nearly sufficient to maintain a family; in return for which they are under the obligation of working for him at a low and fixed price, whenever they are called upon. Except in the immediate neighbourhood of the towns and on the sea-coast, the vacancy of a place of this kind is the only prospect which presents itself of providing for a family. From the small number of people, and the little variety of employment, the subject is brought distinctly within the view of each individual; and he must feel the absolute necessity of repressing his inclinations to marriage, till some such vacancy offer. If, from the plenty of materials, he should be led to build a house himself, it could not be expected that the farmer, if he had a sufficient number of labourers before, should give him an adequate portion of land with it; and though he would in general find employment for three or four months in the summer, yet there would be little chance of his earning enough to support a family during the whole year. * * *

"The young men and women therefore are obliged to remain with the farmers as unmarried servants, till a houseman's place becomes vacant; and of these unmarried servants there is in every farm, and every gentleman's family, a much greater proportion than the work would seem to require." (The reason of which the author explains at large, and then proceeds as follows.)

"The means of maintenance to a single man are therefore much less confined than to a married man; and under such circumstances, the lower classes of people cannot increase much,

till the increase of mercantile stock, or the division and improvement of farms, furnishes a greater quantity of employment for married labourers. In countries more fully peopled this subject is always involved in great obscurity. Each man naturally thinks that he has as good a chance of finding employment as his neighbour; and that, if he fail in one place, he shall succeed in some other. He marries, therefore, and trusts to fortune; and the effect too frequently is, that the redundant population occasioned in this manner is repressed by the positive checks of poverty and disease. In Norway the subject is not involved in the same obscurity. The number of additional families, which the increasing demand for labour will support, is more distinctly marked. The population is so small, that even in the towns it is difficult to fall into any considerable error on this subject; and in the country the division and improvement of an estate, and the creation of a greater number of housemen's places, must be a matter of complete notoriety. If a man can obtain one of these places, he marries, and is able to support a family; if he cannot obtain one, he remains single. A redundant population is thus prevented from coming into existence, instead of being destroyed after it has taken place."

That no one ought to marry till he has a reasonable prospect of supporting a family, has long been considered and acted upon as a common maxim of prudence; and the great aim and tendency of Mr. Malthus's doctrines is merely to enforce this maxim, and to show its importance in a stronger light. There appears, indeed, at first view, some hardship in this remedy, inasmuch as the burden of its application seems to press exclusively on the poorer classes. But the truth is, that the rich as often feel the necessity of postponing marriage as the poor, the former being as much deterred by the fear of descending from their usual rank in society, as the latter by the fear of destitution. The fact is indisputable, that the richer classes multiply no faster than the lower; and this fact affords a decisive proof that the check to population, whether preventive or positive, operates equally upon both. The whole amount, then, of the evil, if evil it can be called, is this,—that a necessity is imposed on all classes of

society, not of suppressing a natural appetite, but merely of exercising with respect to it a certain degree of restraint. The same is true of all our natural appetites, and it well accords with those purposes of moral discipline, which the present condition of man, as I shall hereafter endeavour to show, is designed and fitted to answer. It is the attempt to remedy the evils to which nature subjects us, that stimulates and leads us to all improvement, and the remedy of this evil in particular seems likely to lead to the adoption of more enlightened and efficacious means, than have hitherto been devised, of meliorating the condition of the lower classes of society, and through them, of society at large.

NOTE N. p. 178.

"Allowing," he says, (speaking in the person of Epicurus) "allowing the Gods to be the authors of the existence or order of the universe; it follows that they possess that precise degree of power, intelligence, and benevolence, which appears in their workmanship; but nothing farther can ever be proved, except we call in the assistance of exaggeration and flattery to supply the defects of argument and reasoning. So far as the traces of any attributes at present appear, so far may we conclude these attributes to exist. The supposition of farther attributes is mere hypothesis; much more the supposition, that, in distant regions of space or periods of time, there has been, or will be, a more magnificent display of these attributes, and a scheme of administration more suitable to such imaginary virtues. We can never be allowed to mount up from the universe, the effect, to Jupiter, the cause; and then descend downwards, to infer any new effect from that cause; as if the present effects alone were not entirely worthy of the glorious attributes which we ascribe to that deity. The knowledge of the cause being derived solely from the effect, they must be exactly adjusted to each other; and the one can never refer to any thing farther, or be the foundation of any new inference and conclusion."

Inquiry concerning Human Understanding. Sec. xi.

NOTE O. p. 196.

"If we consider the general rules by which external prosperity and adversity are commonly distributed in this life, we shall find, that notwithstanding the disorder in which all things appear to be in this world, yet even here every virtue naturally meets with its proper reward; with the recompense which is most fit to encourage and promote it; and this too so surely, that it requires a very extraordinary concurrence of circumstances entirely to disappoint it. What is the reward most proper for encouraging industry, prudence, and circumspection? Success in every sort of business. And is it possible that in the whole of life these virtues should fail of attaining it? Wealth and external honours are their proper recompense, and the recompense which they can seldom fail of acquiring. What reward is most proper for promoting the practice of truth, justice, and humanity? The confidence, the esteem, and love of those we live with. Humanity does not desire to be great, but to be beloved. It is not in being rich that truth and justice would rejoice, but in being trusted and beloved, recompenses which those virtues must almost always acquire."

Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments. Pt. iii. *ch.* v.

"We should expect," says another able writer, "from virtuous actions and qualities only their peculiar consequences; and in recommending them to others, we should be careful to do it on just and proper grounds." * * *

"What appears the inevitable consequence of circumstances not in our power, is frequently the natural effect of some subordinate part of our character. The industrious man, who appears at first sight to have been ruined by the misconduct of others, or by some unexpected revolution in the business of society, may in reality owe his ruin to a want of circumspection, prudence, or foresight. The natural consequence of his industry was prosperity, but the natural consequence of his imprudence was loss and misfortune. We must not expect that the exercise of one virtue will be followed by the beneficial consequences of all, neither must we conclude that the indulgence of any vice will be pursued by unmixed evil, and destroy the good effects of better

qualities. All the virtues and the vices have their respective good and evil consequences, which will be felt in proportion as each vice and virtue is exercised. Industry, economy, shrewdness, and caution, for instance, without any great admixture of moral worth, or even in conjunction with meanness and fraudulence, may often be successful in the attainment of wealth; while these qualities so attended, can never yield the fruits of integrity, ease of conscience, elevation of character, and the esteem of the good."

Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions and on other Subjects. p. 212, 213.

NOTE P. p. 203.

"But sometimes virtue starves while vice is fed!
What then? is the reward of virtue bread?
That vice may merit; 'tis the price of toil;
The knave deserves it when he tills the soil,
The knave deserves it when he tempts the main,
Where folly fights for kings or dives for gain.
The good man may be weak, be indolent;
Nor is his claim to plenty, but content.
But grant him riches, your demand is o'er?
'No—shall the good want health, the good want pow'r?'
Add health and pow'r, and every earthly thing.
'Why bounded pow'r? why private? why no king?
Nay, why external for internal given?
Why is not man a god, and earth a heav'n?'
Who ask and reason thus will scarce conceive
God gives enough while he has more to give:
Immense the pow'r, immense were the demand;
Say at what part of nature will they stand?
What nothing earthly gives or can destroy,
The soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy,
Is virtue's prize. A better would you fix?
Then give humility a coach and six,
Justice a conqu'ror's sword, or truth a gown,
Or public spirit its great cure, a crown.
Weak, foolish man! will heav'n reward us there
With the same trash mad mortals wish for here?

The boy and man an individual makes,
Yet sigh'st thou now for apples and for cakes ?
Go, like the Indian, in another life
Expect thy dog, thy bottle, and thy wife ;
As well as dream such trifles are assign'd,
As toys and empires, for a godlike mind :
Rewards, that either would to virtue bring
No joy, or be destructive of the thing.
How oft by these at sixty are undone
The virtues of a saint at twenty-one !
To whom can riches give repute or trust,
Content or pleasure, but the good and just ?
Judges and senates have been bought for gold ;
Esteem and love were never to be sold.
O fool ! to think God hates the worthy mind,
The lover and the love of human kind,
Whose life is healthful, and whose conscience clear,
Because he wants a thousand pounds a-year."

Pope's Essay on Man. Epistle iv.

NOTE Q. p. 208.

" La privation d'une chose que vouz jugez vous être nécessaire, produit en vous un mal-aise ou une inquiétude, en sorte que vous souffrez plus ou moins. C'est ce qu'on nomme *besoin.*

" Le mal-aise détermine vos yeux, votre toucher, tous vos sens sur l'objet dont vous êtes privé. Il détermine encore votre ame à s'occuper de toutes les idées qu'elle a de cet objet, et du plaisir qu'elle pourroit en recevoir. Il détermine donc l'action de toutes les facultés du corps et de l'ame."

Cours d'étude pour l'instruction du Prince de Parme, par Condillac. Tome i. p. 82.

NOTE R. p. 217.

"Comprehension of mind is the great prerogative of intellectual existence. It is that power which beings endowed with reason possess, of combining the past and the future with the present, of governing their conduct and modifying their feelings by recol-

lection and anticipation: and that to such a degree, that the actual sensation shall, at times, constitute but a small portion of the complex feeling and state of mind."

* * * *

"Persons who are advanced in life bear infirmity and pain, losses and bereavements, with a degree of firmness and tranquillity which astonishes the young, who being conscious of the impatience which they should feel in similar circumstances, are apt to conclude that life itself, under such privations and bereavements, ceases to be desirable. But making some abatement for the obtuser feelings of age, it is this wonderful power which affords the true solution of the problem. The mind in its progress through life withdraws itself more and more from the effect of present impressions. It converses more with the ideal world, with its hopes and fears, with its reflections and anticipations. Thus by degrees it comes to depend upon the present instant for a very small proportion of its joys and sorrows. And unless the immediate sensation, whether of pleasure or pain, be unusually intense and permanent, it soon blends itself in the mass of other ideas and internal feelings, and makes but little alteration in the general state and tenor of the mind."

"The natural and necessary tendency of the discipline of life is, to produce this spirituality of mind. A person of common understanding cannot advance far in life, without gaining a considerable degree of superiority over present impressions, and acquiring a habit of regulating his conduct and his feelings by ideal perceptions, by recollections and anticipations, by considerations of health, reputation, virtue, consistency, and the like. To feel and act differently would be to remain always in a state of childhood."

Belsham's Discourses. Sermon I.

NOTE S. p. 250.

"Some have imagined religion to consist in sublime ecstacies, and in rapturous flights of devout affection, which are effects purely mechanical, which depend upon the state of the animal spirits and bodily health, which are often experienced by men

of little religious principle, but of irritable habits, and to which many pious conscientious persons of a more phlegmatic constitution are entire strangers. No self delusion is more common than this. Many serious persons, who are in other respects well informed, and not deficient in judgment, fall into this error; and are disposed to judge principally, and of course most erroneously, of their character and state by the warmth of their devotional feelings. And when, through indisposition, or fatigue, or depression of spirits, or any other accidental circumstance, these affections subside, they are filled with groundless alarm and suspicion, and imagine that they are upon the decline in religion, when, if they judged themselves by the proper standard, they would see the best reason for satisfaction and encouragement."

Belsham's Discourses. Page 195.

NOTE T. p. 252.

The following remarks of a learned and judicious historian are worthy of deep attention.

"To raise an intense feeling of religion, is neither difficult nor sufficient. It is effected now by the Bramin superstition in the Yogees and Jaggernaut victims of India, as it was in ancient times among the whole nation of Egypt, under its monstrous system of bull and goat worship, cat-veneration, and dog-headed deities. In the middle ages, it filled Europe with monks, and Asia with pilgrims and crusaders. It animated St. Dominic, the Pope, and their emissaries, in the murders of the Albigenses. It has supported, and now revived, the Spanish inquisition, and hallowed the Moloch sacrifices of Auto da Fés. The human heart is so constituted, as to be responsive to the sacred touch, to be obedient to the heavenly call. But when the sensibility has been kindled, to what shall it be applied? Here begins the difficulty which every heart has felt and every age lamented. In the direction of this great principle, the mind ignobly, but unavoidably, follows the imperfect reason, feeling, views and habits of the day. Within the period which this History embraces, it was taught to employ its sincere energies in building monas-

teries; in procuring and venerating dead men's bones; in enriching the church; in idle and endless processions; in superstitious rites; in useless pilgrimages; in crusades of danger and death; and in obeying the Machiavellian mandates of a distant pope. Religion, heavenly as its origin has been, sublime as its principle always will be, and great and glorious as are all its future objects, still needs, in every age, as much wisdom as impulse. But it can have no more wisdom for its companion than the age affords. When the judgment is weak and the knowledge small, the fervour of the principle will connect it as much with folly as with truth; and the pious man, with all his sincerity, will offend many by his absurdities, as well as edify by his goodness."

Turner's History of England. Vol. ii. *p.* 316, 317.

"The errors and misfortunes of St. Louis prove that even religion requires the governance of wisdom as much as any other principle of human action; perhaps more, as its alarms, hopes, and energies are greater. Joinville describes him to have thought, that to doubt any article of belief imposed by the papal church, was a temptation of the devil; to die with any doubt would be the loss of his soul; and that it was his duty to exterminate heretics !!!"

Ibid. Vol. i. *p.* 370.

NOTE U. p. 259.

See a printed sermon of the Rev. Robert Hall's, entitled, "Modern Infidelity considered, with respect to its influence on Society." The remainder of the passage contains so much that is worthy of attention, and serves so much more fully to illustrate and confirm the same idea, that I here subjoin it.

"When we reflect," he adds, "on the manner in which the idea of Deity is formed, we must be convinced that such an idea intimately present to the mind must have a most powerful effect in refining the moral taste. Composed of the richest elements, it embraces in the character of a beneficent parent and almighty ruler whatever is venerable in wisdom, whatever is awful in authority, whatever is touching in goodness.

"Human excellence is blended with many imperfections and seen under many limitations. It is beheld only in detached and separate portions, nor ever appears in any one character whole and entire. So that when, in imitation of the Stoics, we wish to form out of these fragments the notion of a perfectly wise and good man, we know it is a mere fiction of the mind, without any real being in whom it is embodied and realized. In the belief of a Deity these conceptions are reduced to reality; the scattered rays of an ideal excellence are concentrated, and become the real attributes of that Being with whom we stand in the nearest relation, who sits supreme at the head of the universe, is armed with infinite power, and pervades all nature with his presence."

"The efficacy of these sentiments in producing and augmenting a virtuous taste will, indeed, be proportioned to the vividness with which they are formed and the frequency with which they recur; yet some benefit will not fail to result from them even in their lowest degree."

"The idea of the Supreme Being has this peculiar property, that as it admits of no substitute, so, from the first moment it is impressed, it is capable of continual growth and enlargement. God himself is immutable, but our conception of his character is continually receiving fresh accessions, is continually growing more extended and refulgent by having transferred upon it new perceptions of beauty and goodness; by attracting to itself as a center whatever bears the impress of dignity, order or happiness. It borrows splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is good, and sits enthroned on the riches of the universe."

"As the object of worship will always be in a degree the object of imitation, hence arises a fixed standard of moral excellence, by the contemplation of which the tendencies to corruption are counteracted, the contagion of bad example is checked, and human nature rises to its natural level."

NOTE X. p. 287.

"The persuasion that exists in the mind of the drunkard in committing his first act of intoxication, that in so doing he complies with the most cogent and irresistible reasons capable of

being assigned upon the subject, *may be exceedingly temporary*; but it is the clear and unequivocal persuasion of his mind *at the moment that he determines upon the action.* The thoughts of the murderer will frequently be in a state of the most tempestuous fluctuation; he may make and unmake his diabolical purpose fifty times in an hour, his mind may be torn a thousand ways by terror and fury, malignity and remorse. But, whenever his resolution is formed, it is formed upon the suggestions of the rational faculty; and when he ultimately works up his mind to the perpetration, he is then most strongly impressed with the superior recommendation of the conduct he pursues. One of the fallacies by which we are most frequently induced to a conduct which our habitual judgment disapproves, is that our attention becomes so engrossed by a particular view of the subject, as wholly to forget, for the moment, those considerations which at other times were accustomed to determine our opinion. In such case it frequently happens, that the neglected consideration recurs the instant the hurry of action has subsided, and we stand astonished at our own infatuation and folly."

Godwin's Inquiry concerning Political Justice. Book i. *ch.* v.

NOTE Y. p. 292.

"Persons addicted to excessive drinking suffer, in the intervals of sobriety, and near the return of their accustomed indulgence, a faintness and oppression *circa præcordia*, which it exceeds the ordinary patience of human nature to endure. This is usually relieved for a short time by a repetition of the same excess; and to this relief, as to the removal of every long continued pain, they who have once experienced it, are urged almost beyond the power of resistance."

Paley's Moral Philosophy. Vol. ii. *p.* 13.

NOTE Z. p. 346.

"In estimating our own merit, in judging of our own character and conduct, there are two different standards, to which we naturally compare them. The one is the idea of exact propriety and perfection, so far as we are each of us capable of

comprehending that idea. The other is that degree of approximation to this idea which is commonly attained in the world, and which the greater part of our friends and companions, of our rivals and competitors, may have actually arrived at.

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The wise and virtuous man directs his principal attention to the first standard; the idea of exact propriety and perfection. There exists in the mind of every man, an idea of this kind, gradually formed from his observations upon the character and conduct both of himself and of other people. It is the slow, gradual, and progressive work of the great demigod within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct. This idea is in every man more or less accurately drawn, its colouring is more or less just, its outlines are more or less exactly defined, according to the delicacy and acuteness of that sensibility, with which those observations were made, and according to the care and attention employed in making them. In the wise and virtuous man they have been made with the most acute and delicate sensibility, and the utmost care and attention have been employed in making them. Every day some feature is improved; every day some blemish is corrected. He has studied this idea more than other people, he comprehends it more distinctly, he has formed a much more correct image of it, and is much more deeply enamoured of its exquisite and divine beauty. He endeavours, as well as he can, to assimilate his own character to this archetype of perfection. But he imitates the work of a divine artist, which can never be equalled. He feels the imperfect success of all his best endeavours, and sees, with grief and affliction, in how many different features the mortal copy falls short of the immortal original. He remembers, with concern and humiliation, how often, from want of attention, from want of judgment, from want of temper, he has, both in words and actions, both in conduct and conversation, violated the exact rules of perfect propriety; and has so far departed from that model, according to which he wished to fashion his own character and conduct. When he directs his attention towards the second standard, indeed, that degree of excellence which his friends and acquaintance have commonly arrived at, he

may be sensible of his own superiority. But, as his principal attention is always directed towards the first standard, he is necessarily much more humbled by the one comparison, than he ever can be elevated by the other." &c. &c.

Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments. Pt. vi. *sec.* iii. *p.* 436.

NOTE Aa. p. 369.

"Whatever," says Godwin, "can be adequately brought home to the conviction of the understanding, may be depended upon as affording a secure hold upon the conduct. We are no longer at liberty to consider man as divided between two independent principles, or to imagine that his inclinations are in any case inaccessible through the medium of his reason. We find the thinking principle within us to be uniform and simple; in consequence of which we are entitled to conclude, that it is in every respect the proper subject of education and persuasion, and is susceptible of unlimited improvement. There is no conduct, in itself reasonable, which the refutation of error and dissipating of uncertainty, will not make appear to be such. There is no conduct which can be shown to be reasonable, the reasons of which may not sooner or later be made impressive, irresistible, and matter of habitual recollection. Lastly, there is no conduct, the reasons of which are thus conclusive, and thus communicated, which will not infallibly and uniformly be adopted by the man to whom they are communicated."

Godwin's Political Justice. Book i. *ch.* v.

THE END.

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